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November 8, 2004 No. 2752 $1.60

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Let's lose the second limbo! ...p.7

59th year of publication

Report commissioned to unite Anglicans itself becomes source of contention

Harry der Nederlanden

A long-awaited report by a special committee convened by the Archbishop of Canterbury scolded the Episcopalian Church in the US for its unilateral action in consecrating an openly gay bishop, but it did not please conservatives. The committee was formed by Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams to make recommendations on how to deal with the strong difference of opinions in the worldwide Anglican community on the issue of gay marriage and gays in the priesthood.

The issue has been brewing a long time, but the ordination of Gene Robinson as bishop of New Hampshire and the decision by the BC diocese to bless gay marriages brought years of tension between conservatives and liberals to a head. Conservatives in the US and Canada took aggressive measures to distantiate themselves from the oversight of liberal bishops, many calling for the formation of a distinct orthodox body within the Anglican Church.

The so-called Windsor Report, released Oct. 18, declared that the actions by the Episcopalian Church in the USA (the US province of the Anglican Church) and the BC diocese of the Canadian church breached "the proper constraints of the bonds of affection" within the Anglican Communion, but it did not recommend any sort of disciplinary action against the US wing of the church. It did call for both to "express regret" for undertaking their actions without first consulting with the rest of the Anglican communion, and it suggested that those church leaders involved in these actions absent themselves from gatherings with their offended brothers and sisters.

Frank Griswold, primate of the US church and Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams

The report further called for a moratorium to such actions until the communion as a whole has had time to deliberate, admitting at the same time that there is no authority structure in place that can impose discipline on the 38 provinces that make up the global Anglican communion.

"By electing and confirming such a candidate [Eugene Robinson, a practicing homosexual] in the face of the concerns expressed by the wider Communion," said the report, "the Episcopal Church has caused deep offense to many faithful Anglican Christians both in its own church and in other parts of the Communion." It also called the US and Canadian policies of blessing same-sex unions an illegitimate application of Christian faith.

The report saved what some called its harshest criticism for those conservative Anglicans who, finding themselves under bishops they regard as heretical, sought leadership from an orthodox bishop from another diocese. Some overseas bishops offered to serve groupings of such "dissenting" conservative churches. The Report told those bishops in no uncertain terms to keep their noses out of other bishops' jurisdictions and told the troublesome "dissenters" to go through proper channels, that is, to ask their own liberal bishops to make arrangements for their leadership.

The Report also proposed that the provinces of the Anglican Communion get together to draw up a covenant that expresses the beliefs of the worldwide body. At present, there is no formal structure binding the Anglican provinces together other than a historical tie to Britain and the Archbishop of Canterbury and periodic gatherings of leaders, whose deliberations, however, are not binding for the body as a whole. Each of the 38 provinces holds its own synod and has its own primate. The Archbishop of Canterbury is not an Anglican pope and there are no binding confessional statements to which all can appeal. Nevertheless, "What touches all should be approved by all," concluded the commission.

The 17 member panel that produced the Windsor Report included bishops, clergy and lay members from across the Anglican community, including one from Canada and one from the US (both teachers).

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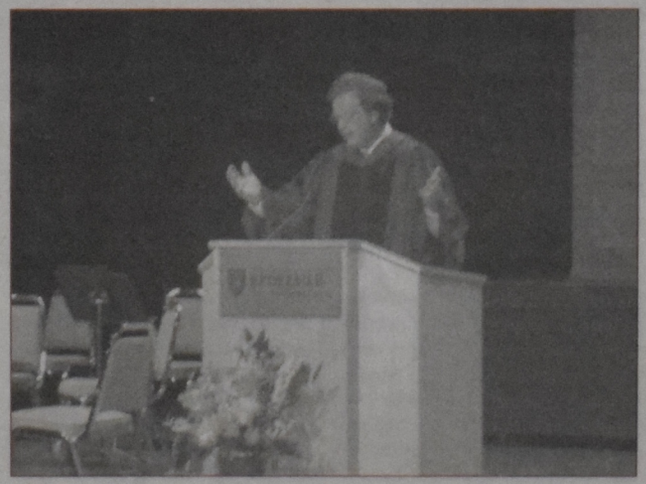
Three cheers for neocalvinism!

Harry der Nederlanden

We live in an age of deep questioning – a questioning that probes to the very foundations of life's meaning, of culture, politics, technology, learning and the church. Everything is being tossed back into the crucible to be melted down and reduced to its basic elements. In fact, even the existence of such basics is rendered doubtful.

The destruction of the environment has led us to question the beneficence of science and technology. The ineradicable, deepening poverty in large parts of the Third World has raised deep misgivings about all economic systems, whether socialist or capital-

*See **Neocalvinism** page 2...*



Craig Bartholomew lecturing

News

Anglicans ... continued from page 1

In the words of a news story on the *Christianity Today (CT)* website, "The Windsor Report leaves conservative Episcopalians hopping mad." That's perhaps overstating it a bit. Some found signs of hope in the report. But all took strong exception to its description of the actions of orthodox believers who sought redress from the "unbiblical" actions of their leaders as equally deserving of condemnation as the actions that made them necessary. Both were judged to be acting "in ways incompatible with the Communion principle of interdependence."

The complaint of Nigeria's primate, Archbishop Peter Akinola, sums it up: "Why throughout the document is there such a marked contrast between the language used against those who are subverting the faith and that used against those of us from the Global South who are trying to bring the church back to the Bible?... The imbalance is bewildering. It is wrong to use equal language for unequal actions."

Conservatives were united also in pointing out that calling on the offending bishops to express their regret is hardly the same thing as calling them to repent. Repentance, Ted Olson of CT points out, involves, among other things, remorse and resolve not to repeat the sin.

The expression of regret made by Frank Griswold, the primate of the US church, for example, is hardly an expression of remorse. He stated that he and his church "regret how difficult and painful actions of our church have been in many provinces of our Communion, and the negative repercussions that have been felt by brother and sister Anglicans." It's an expression of regret that puts the source of pain wholly on those feeling it: "Sorry you feel bad, but that's your problem." This becomes obvious when he at the same time expresses regret that the church has not been made wholly safe for homosexual persons to live out of what they are.

"Feelings and sensitivities take precedence over doctrine, holiness and fidelity," Olson concludes. The overarching concern of the report, one critic after another laments, is on saving the unity and "bonds of affection" of the worldwide body and on observing the proper protocols that preserve civility within the church.

Archbishop Peter Akinola with Desmond Tutu

In a statement released immediately after the report was released (he apparently was the only primate to get an advance copy) Griswold observed: "My first reading shows the report as having in mind the containment of differences in the service of reconciliation" – a fair assessment of its tone and purpose.

This tone pleased Griswold, but not Robert Duncan of the conservative Anglican Communion Network, who said, "It's more concerned about family than it is about faith, and more concerned about unity than it is about truth."

Kendall Harmon, an Anglican theologian and leader among US conservatives, said, "There's not enough of an exploration of biblical calls to discipline and the integration of discipline and community." Summing up, Harmon mused, "It's an under-prescription for the seriousness of the disease."

Part of the problem, however, is perhaps that conservatives expected too much of the Report and did not clearly understand the mandate of the committee or its authority. It was mandated only to explore avenues of reconciling differences and of how the Anglican community might come to discernment and agreement on what is the biblically authorized path for the body to follow in serving as an"anticipatory sign of God's healing and restorative future for the world."

In other words, the writers of the report were not allowed to choose sides in the dispute: it was not their task to adjudicate on the basis of Scripture and tradition whether consecrating openly homosexual bishops is right or whether it is scriptural to bless same-sex marriages. It's job was to lay out a framework in which such contentious issues can be processed without disrupting the communion.

Not only was this commission not authorized to pronounce on the underlying issues, the Report points out that there is no central authority within the Anglican worldwide communion that can pronounce on controversial matters or impose discipline on the autonomous provinces of the church. They are structurally independent of Canterbury. This is why it recommended drawing up a covenant that spells out what it means to belong to the Anglican Communion.

At present there are no guidelines spelling out what differences among the different provinces and dioceses of the church are merely cultural differences and what differences mark a break with Anglican teaching and tradition. One of the key terms in the report is discernment and how to get it. And once arrived at, how does the Archbishop of Canterbury get the other primates and the whole church to acknowledge the authority of such an act of discernment.

This becomes especially problematic because the Report seems to embrace a rather evolutionary notion of truth. Can the truth and the way of reconciliation followed by the church evolve beyond the prescriptions of Scripture? One part of the Anglican church clearly believes that Scripture pushes them to a broader communion than prescribed by the New Testament church, while conservatives insist that to go beyond these boundaries is to become disobedient and therefore to break faith and communion. To seek unity on a false foundation is, then, a contradiction and impossibility.

"In reality," says Albert Mohler, a Southern Baptist theologian, "the Windsor Report sacrifices truth on the altar of unity, and in so doing will destroy the last chance for the unity it so highly prizes." He suggests, I believe correctly, that "the report's concept of doctrinal development and the so-called 'doctrine of reception' makes eventual acceptance of homosexuality virtually assured."

Neocalvinism ... continued from page1

ist. Neither has delivered on its promises. Communism has been thoroughly discredited and exposed as a mass killer, but democracy in the liberal mode seems to deliver largely illusory freedoms. In the West it has freed people to become consumerist libertines and in the Third World it keeps raising up warlords and local wars.

All big ideas and ideals have become suspect, reducible to base motives. For many, post-modernism means the glib exposure of all the big stories that once challenged the brightest and the best to heroic sacrifice as nothing more than strategies of self-inflation and domination. Whereas once learning sought to instill a sense of mission – to share great spiritual, intellectual, cultural and material goods with others – now it seems largely to instill cynicism and skepticism.

Sure, I paint with a broad brush. And it is perhaps true that no generation passes from this earth without experiencing some crisis. But that does not make our own crisis less real.

Believers, as parents, workers and citizens, work hard all their lives not just to build homes and bank accounts for their children, but also to erect edifices of faith and obedience – ways of seeing, thinking and living out the hope that is in us. This includes institutions as well as confessions, theologies, worldviews, polities and liturgies.

And suddenly, as in the Netherlands, an entire generation just walks away from it all. It makes even the most secure believer question where have we gone wrong? Have we made a mess of it?

For such a time as this

In the midst of this uncertainty and self-doubt, we hear ringing words from Dr. Craig Bathomew: "Three cheers for neocalvinism!" Bartholomew is the first to be appointed to the Runner Chair established at Redeemer University College, and his inaugural speech delivered Oct. 1 was titled: "For Such a Time as This: The Relevance of the Neo-Calvinist Tradition Today." Bartholomew suggests that no tradition offers so well what the church needs at this time and place.

Lest we dismiss Bartholomew's enthusiasm as that of a lone convert to the reformational vision, let's recall the feature article that appeared in the Atlantic four years ago this October, "The Opening of the Evangelical Mind" by Alan Wolfe, which traced much of the momentum for the revitalization of evangelical thinking in the US to thinkers associated with Calvin College and with the Kuyperian heritage. Similarly, in a couple of major studies devoted to Christian institutions of higher learning in North America, Calvin College and the model of integration practiced there served as a touchstone for how to nurture a higher learning that is faithful to Scripture. Even the famous

Continued on p. 3...

Politics

Catholic University of Notre Dame is not averse to learning something from the neocalvinists. Charles Colson, too, has been a very strong advocate of worldview thinking in evangelical circles. In his daily column sent out over the internet on *Breakpoint* and in his many books he has aroused a great appreciation for this holistic vision among Christian leaders and students. That it has been undergoing certain transformations in its adoption goes without saying, but it has inspired thinking Christians not just in North America but around the globe to approach every area of human activity with a confidence that biblical truth has something relevant to say to it.

The geography of neocalvinism

His sketch of "the geography of neocalvinism" will be very familiar to readers of *CC*. "For neocalvinists," he says, Christianity is world-formative; it provides a worldview, a way of understanding all of reality, with radical consequences for every part of our lives." Quoting Bernard Zylstra: "The covenant is as wide as creation." Which means, for neocalvinists that "the gospel [is] the healing power which restores creation in line with God's original design and towards its originally intended consummation." The entire story of redemption, from the fall to its final renewal, is God in Christ through his Holy Spirit breaking the power of sin and "guiding the whole of creation back to the objective he decreed for it – the glory of his name."

Secondly, it builds on the insight that God embedded his wisdom in creation: "Everything is created by God with a nature of its own and exists and lives according to a law of its own." This insight was extended by Kuyper to all social relations. The norms and the authority of parents or pastors derives from no other source than the sovereign God.

Neocalvinism affirms that all the products of human history and culture arise as a response to God's calling to mine the potentials he put in creation. They are good in all their diversity; they become evil only when they are misdirected away from God.

Because of this misdirection, there is, fourthly, in all areas of society, on the corporate as well as the personal level, a battle going on – the antithesis. In our cultural activity we are always fighting against idolatry.

As I said, most of us find these ideas to be so familiar as to be almost commonplace, but says Bartholomew, they have been indispensable to the formation of a public theology, which is nothing less than a vocabulary for witnessing to our contemporaries wherever deliberation takes place on how to approach our common problems. He alludes to the work of the great missiologist David Bosch, who, with Lesslie Newbegin, has stressed the importance in communicating the gospel of having some conception of what faith means for the public square. Bosch argued that it is part of our missionary mandate "to ask questions about the use of power in our societies, to unmask those that destroy life, to show concern for the victims of society while at the same time calling to repentance those who have turned them into victims, and to articulate God's active wrath against all that exploits, squanders, and disfigures the world for selfishness, greed and self-centered power."

The neocalvinist tradition is well-positioned to address these needs because it has most fully grasped that redemption and sanctification are not something that occurs at the limits "but as a change that can penetrate the full extent of mundane life." Quoting from Herman Bavinck, Bartholomew says, "The mind of the Christian is not satisfied until every form of existence has been referred to the Triune God and until the confession of the Trinity has received the place of prominence in all our life and thought."

Reviving the tradition

Because of its theology of creation, suggests Bartholomew, neocalvinism is able to meet the historicism of the postmodernists head-on. (Historicism sees all norms, values and structures as nothing more than inventions of man and therefore valid only for a specific time and culture.) He laments that those who know this tradition well have become somewhat jaded and over-familiar with its insights while it is almost wholly unknown elsewhere and only beginning to be discovered.

To revivify it, we need to keep that tradition closely related to Scripture. Looking back, he notes the omnipresence of the Bible in early Christian writings, and we must similarly keep finding our place in the biblical story. We are also in danger of becoming too much at ease in our consumer culture, and that transforming the culture easily leads to adapting to the culture. So we need a dose of Anabaptist critique.

This involves what Bartholomew calls "a cruciform spirituality": "The journey out has to be adequately resourced by the journey in, and sadly neocalvinists are not well known for attending to the journey in. By the journey in I mean a deep, ongoing grounding of our lives existentially in Christ – I mean the development of a prayer life that sustains, nurtures and is the ground for all our public theology."

He concluded his inaugural speech by recalling what Kierkegaard said of Chrysostom, the great preacher of the early church: "He gesticulated with is whole existence."

"Wouldn't it be great," asked Bartholomew, "if this could be said of us neocalvinists?" For Christ's redemption is holistic and witness can never be only in word but must be total, in word and deed, and in all areas of life.

Dr. Craig Bartholomew was born and raised in South Africa. After earning his doctoral degree in theology in Britain on the book of Ecclesiastes, subsequently published as *Reading Ecclesiastes: Old Testament Exegesis and Hermeneutical Theory*, he took a position with the Bible Society of the UK. From there he organized a number of conferences that brought together some of the best thinkers on interpretation theory and biblical study. From these conferences came several important collections of essays, edited by Bartholomew and published by Zondervans. He also has ties to the Institute for Christian Studies and edited the collection of essays by Cal Seerveld, *In the Fields of the Lord*.

Principalities & Powers

David T. Koyzis

Where are the boundaries of Europe?

Turkey's prospects

Unlike most of the continents of the world, Europe's borders are partly geographical and partly conventional. Bounded by the Atlantic and Arctic Oceans and the Mediterranean Sea, the old continent has no clear eastern boundaries. By convention, the Ural Mountains, running along a roughly north-south line through the middle of Russia, form the lengthiest boundary, with Asia lying beyond. Similarly the Caucasus Mountains, between the Black and Caspian Seas, are said to separate Europe from Asia. And finally, the most ancient boundary runs through the waterways dividing European Turkey and Asia Minor.

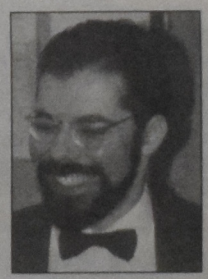
Thus far this is elementary-school geography. But there are two more markers of European identity. The first is civilizational. Although we are wont to speak of the *western* civilization to which we North Americans are heir, it is no secret that our cultural roots are in Europe. West is a *direction*; Europe is a *place* and the origin of our manners and mores – the ways of living to which we are accustomed. If we take a civilizational definition of Europe, where do its boundaries lie? Certainly Canada, the US, Australia, New Zealand, Argentina and a number of other countries would fall within. Chechnya, on the other hand, though within geographical Europe, would appear to fall outside.

The second marker of Europeanness is political. Over the past half century Europeans have been engaged in a grand effort to unite the continent on a federal or confederal basis. What began with the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951 has now evolved into a European Union, possessing many of the attributes of a federal state. It has a parliament whose members are elected every five years. It has at least one and possibly two bodies corresponding to a cabinet in a domestic body politic. There is a high court and an army of "Eurocrats" who administer the EU institutions in Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg.

With the addition of ten new states in May, a grand total of 25 countries are now part of the EU. But which other countries are eligible for membership? Certainly Canada and Australia, despite their European traditions, are too far away and would likely be turned down if they applied. Russia is very nearly a world in itself, its own geographical area much larger than the EU. It could never fit in as just one more member alongside some of its former client states. But what of Ukraine? Or Georgia? Or Morocco?

Next month the EU is slated to decide whether to proceed with Turkey's longstanding application for full membership. Is Turkey really part of Europe or is that stretching the definition? Only a fraction of its territory lies within geographical Europe. Culturally-speaking, it is part of the islamic world, although this civilizational affinity has been attenuated in the eight decades since Mustafa Kemal imposed an official secularism still jealously guarded by the country's military leadership. By mid-century Turkey could have 100 million citizens, far outranking Germany, which will have lost population, as the largest country in the EU. Turkey could become as indigestible as Russia – very nearly a civilization in its own right, with an expanding population ready to fill the jobs being vacated by Europe's diminishing numbers of young people.

Yet since Roman and Byzantine days Asia Minor has possessed a strategic importance to Europe impossible to ignore. If Turkey can be persuaded to clean up its abysmal human rights record, including protection of religious freedoms and withdrawal from Cyprus, it might yet become a good citizen of a united Europe.



David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario, and is the author of the award-winning Political Visions and Illusions *(InterVarsity Press). His weblog can be found at:* <http://byzantinecalvinist.blogspot.com/>.

Editorial

The view from Mt. Nebo

Harry der Nederlanden

There, in the distance, across the Jordan River and the great valley, lies Canaan – the Promised Land. Many times over the last forty years Moses has wondered whether he and his troublesome people would ever make it out of the desert. But at long last, here they are once again on the border, overlooking the green, fertile hills of the land flowing with milk and honey.

After growing up in luxury, he'd become a fugitive and then a wandering sheep-herder. He recalls the miracle of the burning bush, and the terrifying return to Egypt to face the mighty Pharaoh. The plagues, the day of the great exodus, the destruction of Pharaoh's horses and chariots in the Red Sea, the long tortuous trek through the wilderness, the day they turned back to wander forty years in the wilderness, the meeting with Jahweh on the mountain, the manna. It all seems like a strange dream to him now, something that happened to someone else.

Take a good look, says, Jahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, *because, Moses, this is as far as you go. You've done your job, and you've done it well, but now someone else will take over. Take off your shoes; you're not going any farther.*

No triumphal entry into the Promised Land for the great prophet who confronted Pharaoh, who led a tribe of slaves out of Egypt and fashioned them into a people. No uplifting climax to the life of the heroic leader who again and again interposed himself between God and this stiff-necked people. Not for him the final satisfaction of putting his foot on the land promised to his forefathers and his people. No closure here on earth for him. This is as close as he's going to get. So near, and yet so far – an infinite distance. After forty years of walking, of getting ever closer, at last the distance is still unbridgeable. For the man chosen to be mediator, a step he cannot take.

In the last two weeks I came upon two different allusions to this moment in Moses' life, one in a book about archaeology: *The View from Nebo: How Archaeology Is Rewriting the Bible and Reshaping the Middle East* by Amy Marcus. In both cases the story is taken to illustrate the harshness and arbitrariness of the God of Scripture.

Why does God deny Moses his moment in the sun? Down below at the foot of the mountain range of which Nebo is part lies the valley of the Jordan River, the place where the Israelites will cross and where Joshua will erect the monument of twelve stones. Why not allow Moses to at least set foot in Canaan, to participate in that pivotal historical moment that has been his dream – a dream fed to him by Jahweh himself – for over forty years?

Because, God tells Moses, *you struck the stone twice. Don't you remember? Way back there at Meribah? I told you to strike the rock and water gushed out of it – enough to quench the thirst of all the people. Remember? And you didn't just strike it once as I told you; you got mad and struck it twice.*

Twice instead of once. Talk about a punishment disproportionate to the crime! The allusions to the story gave me pause, too, and sent me back to the text. The episode brings out the lawyer and judge in you, doesn't it? Even a legalist might be embarrassed by a God with such a meticulous sense of justice.

Having brought the incident to your attention, the onus is on me to clear away the difficulty – right? But as the story stuck with me over the following days, its strangeness was precisely what spoke to me. At first it struck me as one of those oddities that you stumble across in Scripture every so often – one of those dark texts that require the expertise of somebody versed in ancient Middle Eastern culture to clear up.

But it's *not* an exceptional episode. It is typical of the Old Testament story: it is typical in the way it goes against the human grain.

We are accustomed to think of the biblical story as a seamless garment, a continuous narrative. Theologians have long contrasted the linear view of history of Christianity with the cyclical ones of paganism and now postmodernism. Reformed thinkers have perhaps done so more than other Christian traditions – to stress that the God of the Old and New Testament is one and the same God. The schema – creation, fall, redemption – favored by neocalvinists (see front page story), also stresses continuity: the end is the restoration of God's purposes in creation at the beginning.

But biblical history is characterized by moments like Moses on Mt. Nebo in which the flow of the human story comes to an abrupt halt.

Think of the Tower of Babel, the great flood, Abraham and Sarah's infertility, Abraham's sacrifice of his promised son, the enslavement of Abraham's seed in Egypt, and the barring of the first generation of Israelites from the Promised Land. In each case, the story suffers shipwreck. Catastrophe threatens. The biblical story records one aborted effort after another. And that's just leading up to Moses' moment on Mt. Nebo.

The rest of Israel's history follows suit. It finally culminates in Israel's exile from the Promised Land and its dispersion among the nations.

But then at last comes the long-awaited Messiah, the desire of the ages, preaching that at last the Kingdom has come in our midst. "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" shout the crowds. "Hallelujah!" cry the stones along the road.

But then it happens again: we – philosophers, rulers and priests – escort him to Golgotha, the place of skulls, and nail him to a tree.

The tomb of history opens wide and the story of human longing and waiting once again tumbles into the darkness.

Then, after three days, when the disciples are ready to scatter, there is a new beginning. And Paul proclaims that a new world has dawned and we are part of a new humanity, a new creation.

This is what Moses saw from the top of Mt. Nebo.

In this record of stops and starts, shipwrecks and new beginnings, we read the desires, the dreams and grand purposes that spring up in our hearts and in our politics in response to God's call to make the earth flower to the glory of his name. But also the judgment and ruin that keeps falling on our stories as we try to fashion them in our own power.

This interplay between God's inspiration of our actions and our (mis)appropriation of divine authority and power for our works and culture occurs on every level of our existence: in how we assume the power to name things and form them into a coherent story; in how we remember; in how we take on a sense of identity, of who we really are; in how virtue and love is passed on from generation to generation in the family; in how traditions of learning pass along wisdom and power in the schools; in how tradition both deadens and enables in the church; in how divinely ordained power serves to bring peace and prosperity in the political arena but also exploitation, domination and war. The sword always cuts in two directions.

All through history, at least of the West, we see this interplay between our assumption of divinely ordained capacities to lay the foundations for the City of God and the misery we create as the City of God is deformed into the tyranny of a Hitler, a Stalin, a Saddam. We are constantly beckoned to new beginnings, to a radical makeover, whether as individuals, churches, political leaders or even philosophers. Repeatedly we attempt to leave behind all that has impeded and blighted our lives to launch ourselves into the future along new rails.

America and Canada both began with extravagant dreams of a new beginning in the wilderness not beset by the mistakes and decadence of Europe, oblivious to the fact that the land they were settling was stained with blood. Descartes, Locke and Kant thought that if mankind followed their discipline of thought, it could begin on a new foundation, with a clean slate. Neither the French *philosophes* nor Marx were the first to dream of a revolution, an inversion of the world's order, in which the humble would replace the proud and the world would be a better place, one without the conflict created by inequality.

It's the song of Mary that echoes down the corridors of time. It creates hope. But it also provokes bloodshed. Every utopia gives way to a tyranny. Why is it, laments Octavio Paz, that every revolution turns out not to be THE revolution?

The recognition of this double dynamic at the very roots of human culture is also part of the neocalvinist heritage, although it owes much to Augustine. It is summed up in *semper reformanda*: always reforming, daily conversion. In this saying we confess that we can never rest on foundations we lay ourselves, but must keep returning for renewal to the Source of all good and all authority, to whom be the glory, now and forever. Amen.

From this side of the Jordan, we look beyond our exhausted age to the age to come, beyond our civilization and the clash of cultures to the city fashioned by God. The Promised Land is wholly a gift of a gracious God, but in Christ we do get a mountain-top view of his now and coming Kingdom, and by his Spirit we already experience its presence in our present work and fellowship.

Christian Courier

Founded in 1945

An independent biweekly that seeks to: report on significant events in the Christian community and the world; express opinions infused by Scripture and rooted in a Reformed perspective; provide contact for the Christian community.

EDITORIAL TEAM & PRODUCTION STAFF

Editor: Harry der Nederlanden editor@christiancourier.ca
Circulation: Rose der Nederlanden subscriptions@christiancourier.ca
Accounts/Advertising Manager: Ineke Medcalf-Strayer ads@christiancourier.ca

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Christian Courier
1 Hiscott St, St. Catharines ON L2R 1C7
Tel: (905) 682-8311; 1-800-969-4838
Fax: (905) 682-8313; Web site: www.christiancourier.ca
Publications Mail Registration No. 09375
We acknowledge the financial assistance of the Government of Canada, through the Publications Assistance Program (PAP), toward our mailing costs.

Letters

How will the next U.S. President's faith influence his politics?

As the Nov. 2 U.S. presidential election approaches, growing numbers of Americans and Canadians view President George W. Bush as a "faith-based president." Richard Gwyn, in his column, "Faith and ideology a potent mix for Bush," believes that Bush's re-election "will do more to change the nature of American politics" than most people realize. He contends: "Bush's re-election will have more decisive consequences than his election in 2000." (Oct. 20, 2004)

Harroon Siddiqui, in his column, "Bush running to be national pastor," fears that "He is fusing church and state". Siddiqui asks "What's happening to America itself?" (Oct. 21, 2004) In his next column, "Fusing God and country," Siddiqui quotes Professor Charles Taylor of McGill University, "Faith is not just faith in God, it is faith in America." Oct. 24, 2004

Both columnists apparently missed Senator John Kerry's forthright faith-statements during the Oct. 13 TV debate.

After reviewing the presidential candidates' declarations, it is quite apparent that both President Bush and Senator Kerry hold strong political convictions rooted in their Protestant and Catholic faiths.

The President's "moral" views often are hotly debated; not only as they pertain to the war in Iraq and the Ballistic Missile Defense system, but also as he applies them to the controversies surrounding abortion and same-sex marriage.

However, the Senator's faith-beliefs are equally relevant. During the Oct. 13 (third) debate Kerry asserted, "We're all God's children" (including gay people). He reminded the huge TV audience: "The President and I share the belief that marriage is between a man and a woman." Kerry also agreed with Bush who stated "I do know that we have a choice to make in America and that is to treat people with tolerance and respect and dignity."

Significantly, the Senator then declared: "But I also believe that because ... we're a country with a great, unbelievable Constitution, with rights that we afford people, that you can't discriminate in the workplace. You can't discriminate in the rights that you afford people."

Unlike Bush, Kerry supports a woman's right to choose an abortion and unlimited stem-cell research. He went on to say: "I am a Catholic. And I grew up learning how to respect" dissenting views, such as those held by Catholic archbishops.

"My faith affects everything I do, in truth. There's a great passage of the Bible that says, 'What does it mean, my brother, to say you have faith if there are no deeds? Faith without works is dead.' And I think that everything you do in public life has to be guided by your faith, but without transferring it in any official way to people.

"That's why I fight against poverty. That's why I fight to clean up the environment and protect the earth. That's why I fight for equality and justice. And all of these things come out of that fundamental teaching and belief of faith."

Whether the American voters and the political pundits like it or not, the result of this ideological (faith-based) campaign will be the election of a "faith-based president." His faith and values will make a real difference to his politics. The President's particular view of freedom, human rights, and justice will inevitably affect the national life of the U.S. and the troubling future of the world.

The unavoidable challenge facing Canadians and our government is: which uniting core values and life-affirming principles will Canada and our leaders actually embrace and practice – specifically regarding human rights, international aid and socio-economic development?

Canada should be a courageous, conscientious neighbor to the U.S. Our country should be an independent nation that consistently is a prophetic presence that makes a substantial difference for lasting peace and justice for vulnerable people the world over.

Lest current trends go from bad to worse!

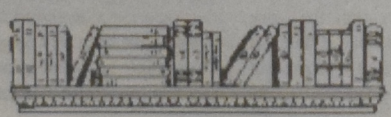
Gerald Vandezande, CM
Scarborough Ontario
Telephone: (416)-293-8912

Redeemer students looking for books

Many of the students in Kuyper's Café – a student group that I helped form recently to help students recover and get excited about the neocalvinist tradition – are keen to get hold of good Reformed books. Some of these are out of print and others are too expensive for students to buy. I suspect that many readers out there have these books gathering dust on shelves and that some might be only too keen to part with them for keen students.

Would it be possible to ask any readers keen to help in this respect to forward such books to me here at Redeemer and I will distribute them to deserving students free of charge.

Mark Van Beveren
Comm/Media Relations
Redeemer University College
777 Garner Road East Ancaster,
Ontario CANADA L9K 1J4
ph (905) 648-2131 ext 4233
alt(905) 648-2139 ext 4233
fx (905) 648-2134



No time to do the whole bike tour? Join the relay team

Burlington, Ont.– Cyclists who want to take part in next summer's bicycle trek across Canada but can't do the whole ride now have an opportunity to ride as part of a relay team.

Organizers of the cross-Canada tour called Sea to Sea with the CRC are offering a new registration plan that will allow Christian Reformed congregations to send a team of up to three cyclists. Each rider would take a section of the route.

"We hope to have 257 cyclists on the road at any given time next summer, representing the CRC's 257 congregations and ministry centres in Canada," said Ed Witvoet, tour manager.

"We recognize that there are limitations to what is possible and feel this new registration structure is the best way to balance getting more people involved while maintaining a safe, manageable cycling experience."

"The market has been asking for a relay," said Chris Berghuis, tour advancement manager, "and we've heard you.

"We felt the simplest way to run the tour was to have as many people as possible go the entire route. But we also want to advance the tour's goals of celebration, unity and fund-raising for future growth of God's kingdom and feel this new exciting opportunity will do that."

This is the second of three phases to the registration process. The third phase, which begins Dec. 1, opens the route to individual cyclists to ride one of the three designated sections: Vancouver to Regina; Regina to Guelph, Ont.; and Guelph to Halifax.

To date 78 cyclists have registered to ride the full route from Vancouver to Halifax. Organizers hope that offering a wider range of opportunities will enable more people to participate and get more churches involved.

The tour celebrates the CRC's centennial in Canada while raising support for church planting.

Details about the new phases have been sent to churches this week and will be posted on the tour's web site www.crcna.org/seatosea/

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Member of Canadian Church Press and Evangelical Press Association

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(ISSN 1192-3415) Published biweekly on Mondays.
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Opinion

How to kill civility, hooligan style

Harry Antonides

Intimidation by mob rule works.

That's the conclusion no doubt drawn by pro-Palestinian rioters who disrupted the visit by former Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu to Concordia University in September 2002.

We are now two years later, and the instigators of that violence are no doubt quite pleased with themselves. Their lawless behavior has paid off – again.

In early October the Concordia University in Montreal barred a planned visit by another former Israeli prime minister, Ehud Barak. This is the same Barak who worked very hard to bring about a peaceful solution to the violence-ridden Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In 2000 then prime minister Barak brokered the most generous offer ever made. But Yasser Arafat spurned the peace offer that would have given the Palestinians 97 per cent of what they demanded. Instead, he started the deadly intifada of suicide bombers that ripped apart hundreds of men, women and children.

The peacemaker Barak was no more welcome than Netanyahu at Concordia. So this time before the first stone was thrown and windows busted, the administration capitulated and told the organizers that the planned event where Mr. Barak would speak could not take place at the University campus.

Not a question of freedom?

Concordia's vice-president services explained: "This is a question not of freedom of speech. It is a question of our ability to ensure security ... to the residents and to the institutions.... The police presence that would be required on our campus is something that members of our community, who remember events of several years ago, I think would have difficulty with."

A spokesman of the Jewish student group that had invited Mr. Barak accused the administration of allowing a violent few to "hijack" the university. He urged the administration to "reclaim your campus."

A representative of the Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights had the audacity to equate Mr. Barak (a "war criminal") with Saddam Hussein; she said that both are human rights violators.

The *National Post* published a pro and con article about this event on October 7.

Ten of Concordia's officials, including the president and vice-chancellor, Frederick H. Lowy, signed the article in which they said that their move was not "a failure to protect free expression and a capitulation to mob rule."

They wrote that they were fulfilling their responsibility to protect the university population against violence, while also protecting the free speech by offering to co-sponsor Mr. Barak's visit at a different location. They faulted the Jewish student group for refusing that offer. They then turned the tables on these students by questioning their true motivation and suggesting that they merely wanted to "advance their own political agenda without regard for the potential consequences for Concordia University."

To prove their good intentions they pointed out that "not only controversial Jewish and Arab speakers but controversial commentators on a variety of topics regularly speak at this university.... We stand on our proven record of open debate and freedom of expression that is second to no other university in this country."

A failing grade

On the other hand, the lone voice in defence of the Jewish students' freedom of speech at this campus came from Gil Troy, professor of history at McGill University. His article placed alongside that of the Concordia representatives argued that to shrug off this surrender to intimidation means that "we fail as academics."

He wrote that banning Barak from Concordia "punishes the potential victims and not the potential perpetrators of the crime. It is unfathomable to me that the mere threat of violence can silence speakers – especially one known internationally as a peacemaker – and it is unconscionable for a university to create this kind of a precedent."

Professor Troy pointed out that to offer an off-campus site is no solution, but an implicit admission that something is rotten (he actually said "broken") at Concordia. He reprimanded his colleagues for their silence in the face if this travesty. He challenged them, not just at Concordia, but everywhere in this country to stand up and defend the freedom of speech in, of all things, a place of learning where such freedom is considered sacred. He reminded them that this kind of appeasement is not peace but amounts to a dereliction of duty on the part of educators and politicians.

He asked whether the Premier of Quebec, Jean Charest, and Prime Minister Paul Martin "sleep well at night knowing that fundamental Canadian values of decency, civility and dialogue are being threatened under their watch? Do they understand that there is no peace, no order, and no good government when we can't even sit and reason together on a university campus?"

Professor Troy views this incident in the larger context of what is happening in the academic world. He laments that the atmosphere in universities instead of being open to a variety of views is now one in which only certain views are considered acceptable. This is especially evident in the animosity toward the U.S and Israel, despite the fact that the latter is the only democracy in the Middle East.

A "toxic environment"

He writes that on the campuses throughout North America, there is "all too often a toxic environment that festers, that politicizes everything, that polarizes everyone, that divides colleagues, silences dissenters and conquers our spirit."

Ironically, as Troy points out, it is often in the name of diversity that only one perspective, only one school of thought is tolerated. And woe to the free thinkers, to those who refuse to fall in line with the ideological trend of the moment, held by the "narrow-minded thought police who might be temporarily ascendant."

Troy reminds his colleagues of the university's true mission, and he challenges them to reason together and to stand together against intolerance and intimidation. He concludes: "If we don't take that stand right now, it will only get worse and worse."

Professor Troy is right in alerting his colleagues that they are delinquent in their duty if they do not rise with one voice to protest against what happened at Concordia. While many of them are quite eager to jump on the favored ideological trend of the moment, they are AWOL when the occasion calls for protesting with one voice against Concordia's surrender to mob rule.

Ehud Barak

Why do they do that? Let me mention two reasons.

One has to do with the simple issue of professional (job) security. Do you think that Professor Troy will ever be considered for a position at Concordia? Exactly.

The other is what he describes as a toxic environment of intolerance and intimidation, which unfortunately is not a problem only at Concordia. It is a malady that afflicts the academic world of the public universities at large. There postmodernism, the notion that there is no truth, reigns supreme. The practical effect is not that academic practitioners believe in nothing. If that were the case, they would not be able to teach anything. The fact is that a great deal of teaching, especially in the social sciences, is governed by ideology, often embraced with fanatic enthusiasm that brooks no dissension.

Only a few professors have had the courage of professor Troy to call it as they see it. Another one is Ian Hunter, who spent 26 years as a professor of law (now emeritus) at the University of Western Ontario. He had this to say about the university scene today:

"Unfortunately. The postmodern university has given up on truth. So it creates degree-granting departments organized around ideology; once founded upon ideology, it is bootless to complain when such non-disciplines have only brainwashing and activism to offer their hapless students.... I reserve my scorn for the university faculties, senates and presidents who not only tolerate but encourage such intellectual corruption at their institutions." (*National Post*, July 6, 2000)

A Breach of Trust

The Concordia authorities' defence that they made a fair offer of helping to co-sponsor the disputed event at a different location cuts no ice. For one thing, if they fear trouble, why transfer that to another location? It is simply a shortsighted case of the NIMBY syndrome.

Most importantly, their surrender will only encourage the perpetrators. They will logically chalk up the cancellation of the Barak event as one more victory. Any one who thinks that these enemies of free and open debate will now be satisfied is lacking in common sense. They will look on this as more evidence that violence pays.

But it's not only the university that is at fault here. According to observers who were present at the 2002 anti-Netanyahu riot, the police stood by in some cases when people were attacked, and they failed to prosecute vigorously the perpetrators of that vicious attack. If the authorities, who have available the combined resources of university and law enforcement, are unwilling to enforce even one of the most basic rights of free citizens, what can we expect in the future?

The bitter truth is that unrestrained and unpunished violence begets more violence. In fact the enemies of freedom have just been reassured that sometimes only the threat of violence is enough.

Professor Troy should be honored for speaking the truth about the ugly reality on the campuses throughout North America.

Finally, there is bitter irony in the name of Concordia University. For it is taken from the motto of the city of Montreal, "Concordia Salus," which means "well-being through harmony."

The reality is that the actions of this university's governors amount to a breach of trust that promotes neither well-being nor harmony. And for that we are all the losers, especially those who seek to be educated at this institution.

Harry Antonides
hantonides@sympatico.ca

Let's lose the second limbo!

Canada should shorten the wait for IRB-recognized refugees

Chris Pullenayegem

In September, the Public Justice Resource Centre made public a proposal on refugee policy that has long been in the development process. A background paper by lawyer Andrew Brouwer, entitled *Permanent Protection: Why Canada should grant permanent resident status automatically upon conferral of protected person status*, sets out the reasoning and the context for this idea. A version of the backgrounder is included in the September 2004 issue of the journal *Refuge*, which executive director Harry Kits guest-edited.

Citizens for Public Justice is convinced that the change being proposed in Andrew Brouwer's paper is an idea whose time has come. Here, in a nutshell, is the argument for why Canada should change its lengthy process for the recognition of refugee claimants as permanent residents of Canada.

Presently, unsponsored asylum seekers who arrive in Canada seeking protection from persecution are required to undergo a three-stage process to secure permanent protection (the legal status often referred to as "landed immigrant status.")

The first stage of the journey towards "landed" status starts when a person enters the country and makes a claim for asylum. He or she is required to go through a screening process in which identity is established and photographs and personal data electronically filed. Those who do not possess official identity documents or who carry spurious ones are held in detention.

The next step brings each claimant for a hearing before a judge-member of the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB). A screening, concerned largely with health, security and criminality questions, precedes the hearing, which is usually held within 12 months of the claim. In the meantime, claimants may obtain a work permit if they prove that they are otherwise unable to support themselves.

If the claim is successful, the IRB judge recognizes the claimant as a refugee and grants him or her "protected person" status. Rejected claimants are marked for removal from Canada. Those accepted have 180 days within which to make an application for permanent residence status.

For a large majority of those who submit applications, the IRB's green light is the beginning of a lengthy wait, languishing in a state of legal limbo. During this second wait, another thorough screening is performed. Five departments of state – Citizenship and Immigration (CIC), the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), Canadian Security and Intelligence Services (CSIS), the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and the Ministry of Health – play various roles in assessing the application for permanent residence. Checks, verifications, re-validating security and medical certificates, long intervals of inactivity, and little feedback to applicants, result in a state of uncertainty which can last for years with no one taking responsibility for bringing matters to closure.

Continued on page 13....

COUNTRY COUNTERCULTURE

VERN M. GLEDDIE

Fall clean-up

The weather

Recently 30 cm. of heavy wet snow brought fall to an abrupt end, thus greatly shortening the farm job list. Unfortunately for some the completion of harvest is off the list. A substantial amount of small grains crops will now over-winter in the fields. Earlier in October a frost of -8 degrees C. destroyed about a third of root crops. There was also a heavy snowfall in early September which set harvest back two weeks.

This is not a complaint about unseasonable weather. There is an issue, however, and that is with the forecasting of the weather. There was not a lot of sympathy from farmers for the meteorologists recently out on strike with other federal civil servants. Research at a prairie university only confirmed suspicion when it found weather forecasters get their job right about 50% of the time. Anyone could do that by simply flipping a coin.

During harvest I make it a point to not listen to weather forecasts. Farmers are too weather-dependent to risk listening to a forecast-challenged "expert." The snowfall that flattened crops in September was officially forecast as flurries. The snowfall in October that ushered in winter with more snow than we sometimes get all winter was variously predicted to be anywhere from two to 10 cm.

The Federal government's recent directive to all departments to cut 5% from their respective budgets shows little intelligence or care. Rather, it would seem prudent to cut off funds to needless operations and apply them to obvious needs. For instance, the salary and support systems for a few meteorologists would be better spent at a Federal research station looking for the cause of BSE (mad cow disease).

Madly avoiding mad cow

Media reports on the latest development in the BSE debacle continue to bring nothing fundamentally new. Every mention of the condition is prefaced with the usual explanation that the disease is caused by feeding cattle the remains of diseased animals. Fortunately a few more scientists and people prominent in the livestock industry are admitting the condition may be more complex than contaminated feedstuff.

Our governments are taking a new tack now, admitting they never should have placed such a strong emphasis on exportation of animals and meat to the USA. Belatedly the emphasis is now on national consumption, value-added product and exports to elsewhere than the States.

A new meat research facility is going up at the University of Alberta and one of the pursuits there will be to find ways to sell more meat in spite of the BSE-related American cattle embargo.

Nothing is said about getting to the root of the problem, leaving no stone unturned until theories have been thoroughly tested with the distinct possibility of discovering the cause of BSE. And so agriculture will continue under a dark cloud which could rain or hail or fog but never go away....

Right and wrong

In another morality issue, an investigation by Alberta's auditor-general into the large sum of provincial money handed out to the beef industry earlier in the year found that the large chunk of it filling the pockets of packers was not "wrong". The minister of agriculture also claimed, "we did nothing wrong," in spite of the fact packers have been using the border closure to make huge profits at rancher's expense. As with conflict of interest, if there is no specific law to contravene, no law is transgressed. The law, however, will never cover all wrong-doing when morality, good and decency are at stake. Legalism seems a convenient haven.

Unfortunately, those entrusted with the common good seem generally distracted by polls and re-election possibilities. Furthermore, the electorate is not holding their "feet to the fire" as some politicians are fond of requesting. Public apathy is not surprising when our present "first-past the gate" system of election does not allow for much grass-roots input. A system with little built-in accountability doesn't engender responsibility.

We are down on the farm

A family attending our small rural church is realizing that for them ranching can only be an expensive hobby and they will sell their herd this fall at sacrifice prices. Another young family from the church has declared after successive years of drought and now a wet fall, this will be their last year farming. The small margin between costs and returns in good years could not sustain them in a series of bad years even though they cultivate three thousand acres of fertile land. These are two examples of a trend which is poised to become an avalanche of hopelessness.

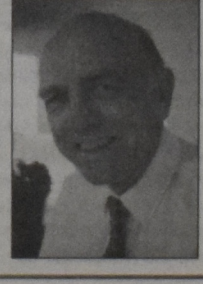
The nation cannot afford to lose more people off the land. Food production and care of the countryside are too important to us all. Not only must grower/stewards be kept on the land but they must feel valued as custodians and providers. If the current low morale of farmers does not improve, the resulting exodus, abandonment, family break-up and suicide will be catastrophic. Resilience is not forever.

Re-membered

On Thanksgiving week-end my wife and I were called back to two church congregations of which we had been members. One was celebrating its 25th anniversary and the other its 50th.

We were glad to be a part of the celebrations. It was striking though, participating in both in one week-end, to observe how divergent the body of Christ is. Both groups have a liturgy; the one is very deliberate, crafted and inclusive of many participants and the other has fallen into a form where certain elements exist for practical or democratic reasons. One emphasizes justice and (as a result?) includes an unusually high number of disadvantaged and wounded. The other emphasizes missions, especially foreign missions, and gives support to a long list of missionaries.

The remembering, both programmed and personal, was touching. We carry good memories from both groups. Furthermore we felt re-membered, that is, reconnected. To put it another way, we did not feel dismembered. And we are happy to now be in a third unique congregation brimming with new believers and active in the community. My wife wondered aloud about how we will all get along in heaven being so different in our styles here on earth. We are confident that when sin and guilt will finally be gone diversity as it was meant to be will be perfect harmony.



Vern Gleddie lives on a sheep ranch near Edmonton, AB.

Church

Iraqi Christians fleeing to Jordan, Syria

Christian leaders say Iraqi church's future threatened

Dale Gavlak

AMMAN, Jordan, and DAMASCUS, Syria (Compass) — A quiet but steady hemorrhaging of Iraq's ancient Christian presence is underway and little is being done to stem the flow.

Written threats, kidnappings, bombings and murder by Muslim extremists are driving thousands of Iraq's minority Christian population out of their ancestral homeland, fleeing for safety to neighboring Jordan and Syria.

"The Christians are experiencing an absence of leadership," explained Hala Hikmat, a recent arrival from Baghdad who has joined thousands of her countrymen in Syria. "We have no leaders who are communicating our urgent needs to the authorities, so consequently each person has to take care of themselves." Their urgent needs, as expressed by Hikmat, are for protection and for a stand to be taken on Christians' behalf.

A string of church bombings in August and September sent anywhere from 30,000 to 40,000 Christians fleeing the country, according to estimates by Iraqi government and church officials. And they admit that hundreds more families out of Iraq's 750,000 Christians are leaving each week.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) disputes these figures, saying they are too high. But UNHCR offices in Amman and Damascus admit that it is hard to know exactly how many Iraqi Christians are currently in Jordan and Syria.

Of the 4,000 Iraqi families officially registered as refugees with the agency in Damascus, more than half are Christians. It is believed that there are larger numbers of Iraqis in Syria because it is cheaper to live there than in Jordan. Iraqi Christians also said they have stronger cultural and spiritual ties to Syria. Syrian authorities estimate there are about 300,000 Iraqis in the country.

"The Syrian government has been extremely generous to the Iraqis," explained Abdelhamed El Ouali, UNHCR head in Damascus. "It has kept the borders open without political considerations. And it believes it has a sacred duty to allow Iraqis who need safety to stay as long as necessary. But I am afraid if the numbers continue to rise dramatically without any international assistance, the situation here could change," he warned.

A member of Iraq's Chaldean Catholic community, who refused to give her name for fear of reprisals against family members, said she lived near one of the churches that was bombed in Baghdad last August. "I received a letter threatening me. It also claimed that the church where I served would explode while I was inside," she said, "unless I paid $300,000.

"We are poor people and do not have such money, so I took my husband and my son and we fled to Syria," she said.

The synchronized bombings of five churches on August 1 and a car bombing at a Baghdad church on September 10 sent shock waves through the Christian community. Iraqi officials blamed al-Qaeda ally and Jordanian terror-mastermind Abu Musab al-Zarqawi for the attacks.

A university student visiting Syria from Baghdad said she wanted to attend mass at the Chaldean Church of St. Terese of Little Jesus while she was in Damascus because there was little opportunity now to worship back home without fear. "We can't attend services because all of the churches are threatened with explosions," she said. "No one knows what will happen now."

Most of Iraq's Christians are Chaldean eastern-rite Catholics who are autonomous from Rome but who recognize the pope's authority. Other Christian denominations in Iraq include Roman and Syrian Catholics; Assyrians; Greek, Syrian and Armenian Orthodox; Presbyterians; Anglicans; and evangelicals.

One Baptist woman from Baghdad who also refused to give her name said she had taken to wearing a head-covering when going outside, simply to protect herself and her children. "It is very risky now to go out on the streets in Iraq without a scarf on your head," she said. "When I dared to do it, people shouted at me from a passing car that I had to respect Islamic traditions in a country where Muslims are the majority."

But the woman said that was not the main reason why her family fled Iraq. Her husband is a university professor. She explained that because he is a Christian and an educated professional, he was a double target for militants. "They have been killing university professors. They want to rid Iraq of intellectuals.

"We have received threats and letters saying they have not incurred enough casualties. We were frightened and decided to leave."

Although Iraq's top Shiite Muslim cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, has condemned the assaults on churches as "hideous crimes," Muslim leaders have largely refused to criticize the killings of Christians who work for the U.S. military or sell liquor. Beauty salons and shops selling music cassettes run by Christians have also been targeted because they are deemed offensive to strict Islamic practices.

Christian businessman Sawa Eissa said it was more than threats that forced him and his family out of Baghdad and over the border to Jordan. He said militants linked to renegade Shiite Muslim cleric Moqtada al-Sadr recently kidnapped and tortured him until his family paid ransom money.

"A gang came to my shop with machine guns and forced me into a car where I remained for nine days," he said. "They wanted $200,000 from me.

"They repeatedly hit me and poured boiling water all over my body. I was held hostage until my family paid them $50,000 to finally get me released."

Eissa, who is in his mid 50s, now walks with a cane and burn marks are visible on his body. He said he and his family hope to find permanent refuge in Australia because he cannot find legal work in Jordan.

An Iraqi church leader, Noel Farman, said other Iraqis have also become victims of the escalating violence and militant clashes with U.S. and Iraqi forces. But because Christians are much fewer in number, he argued, attacks against them have a disproportionate impact.

"Christians in Iraq are becoming more and more of a minority, and they are being sacrificed for the sake of the war against terrorism taking place on the battlefield of Iraq," he said. "We feel depressed, because we are considered like a 'playing card' that outside forces can manipulate for their own aims.

"We Iraqis of various religious and ethnic backgrounds are used to living together and enjoying good relationships, but now these relations are being exploited," Farman explained, shaking his head.

The number of Christians in Iraq is expected to drop as long as hostilities continue in the country, in line with their already steady decline over the past 15 years. Before the 2003 war, Christians represented one million out of Iraq's 25 million inhabitants, while a 1987 census recorded their number as 1.4 million.

A Syrian Orthodox bishop, preferring not to be named, said he feared Iraq's Christian population could totally disappear within a decade if emigration continues at its current rate. But Farman was more hopeful. He said the Iraqi church was resilient and would move underground if the circumstances worsened.

Yet even in these troubled times, there are stalwart Christians who are choosing not to leave their homeland. A small group of Pentecostal Christians who visited Amman recently from Baghdad reported that their church is growing, despite some outward pressure. In another instance, a family returned to the Iraqi capital in order to start a Bible study with women from one of the Catholic churches targeted in the August blasts.

Without a strong Christian presence in Iraq, or candidates in the upcoming elections who insist on a separation between religion and the state, the country could move precariously toward becoming a theocracy dominated by Islamic parties and clerics. Iraqi Christians said they do not want to leave their country, but without the needed recognition and support of their rights, staying there is becoming a more difficult proposition.

German ban on religious symbols in schools may affect nuns

Frauke Brauns

Bielefeld, Germany (ENI) – A German federal court has ruled that a regional state ban on Muslim teachers wearing headscarves in public schools in the state of Baden-Wuerttemberg must also apply to members of other religions bearing their symbols.

The ruling could be interpreted to include Christian nuns who teach in public schools, meaning they would be banned from wearing their habits when giving lessons, say some legal authorities about the ruling, which has attracted recent media attention.

The written judgement of the Federal Administration Court in Leipzig, eastern Germany, ended a six year dispute between the state of Baden-Wuerttemberg and Fereshta Ludin, a Muslim teacher. Ludin, who says she wears a headscarf for religious reasons, had been barred from teaching since 1998.

On 24 June the court ruled that the provincial law of Baden-Wuerttemberg passed in April was consistent with the German constitution and that the law did not question the neutrality of the German state.

But in its written ruling made available on October 8, the court decreed the law would be unjust if it did not also apply to the symbols of other religions.

"There can be no question of an exception for certain forms of religiously motivated clothing in certain regions," the court stated.

"The court has decided about the headscarf at public schools. What that means about nuns wearing habits is open to interpretation," Wolfgang Sailer, spokesperson of the Federal Administration Court, told Ecumenical News International.

Most members of religious orders who teach at public schools in Baden-Wuerttemberg give lessons in religion and teachers giving such classes are not expected to be neutral, Sailer noted. "The problem with nuns or monks wearing habits at public schools would occur if they are teaching subjects other than religion," he said.

Baden-Wuerttemberg education minister Annette Schavan welcomed the court decision, noting: "This judgement was on the question of wearing headscarves, it has not explicitly ruled how to deal with nuns wearing their professional uniform."

Germany is home to more than three million Muslims, while two thirds of the population belong to a Christian denomination. In neighboring France, the Islamic headscarf and other religious symbols are banned from state schools, applying to both teachers and students.

"It is now time to stop asking the courts," Ludin told the Islamic Newspaper and accepted the judgement. "I wear the headscarf for religious reasons. That some have tried to argue my point politically was never my intention."

Church

Bible-reading has dropped even further in The Netherlands

The number of people who possess and read the Bible has plummeted over the last decade. Only 54 percent of people in the Netherlands have a Bible in their homes. And church membership has fallen off even more. While only eight years ago about half of all the Dutch counted themselves as church members, today that has dropped to 33 percent.

The statistics come from a survey of some 1000 people; it was taken on the occasion of the release of a new Bible translation.

The state of religion in the Netherlands has altered dramatically over the last thirty years, according to a report in *Trouw*. Only one in five still believes in a personal God. According to H. Stoffels, a sociologist of religion at the Free University, some two-thirds of Netherlanders are free-floating consumers: they aren't exactly non-religious but make up their own ideas of God. In fact, says Stoffels, there is perhaps a renewed interest in religion, but most find refuge in a Beyond or Hereafter that they have invented for themselves.

Bible ownership among Roman Catholics is so low that even Hindus, Buddhists and the unchurched are more likely to possess a Bible.

But just because most Protestants have a Bible doesn't mean that they read it. The number of people who read the Bible at most once a month has risen from 25 percent in 1966 to 47 percent today. And fewer are reading it to strengthen their faith. It is read out of cultural interest rather than as a source of personal faith. Almost no one reads the Bible at the table anymore, says Stoffels.

A poll conducted among Dutch pastors is more encouraging, said, Stoffels, who called them "religious virtuosi." The great majority are dedicated men and women who do depend on the Bible as a source of inspiration, and see it as a relevant book. Nine out of ten read it every day. Their interpretation of Scripture, however, he calls more nuanced than of old. Almost half of Protestant pastors who call themselves orthodox no longer believe everything in the Bible. They are more apt to speak of the Bible as a book of our experience of God than as God's Word.

Most – 77 percent – were eager for the new translation.

Muslim militants in Nigeria threaten to kill Christian nurses

Obed Minchakpu

KEFFI, Nigeria (Compass) – Muslim militants have threatened to kill Christian nurses serving at the Federal Medical Center in the town of Keffi, in the central state of Nasarawa, Nigeria, unless they stop conducting Christian worship services.

An undated letter received by the hospital's chapter of the Fellowship of Christian Nurses (FCN) – also delivered to hospital management – stated, "We are making it abundantly clear that our thirst for your heads/blood is mounting daily if you continue with your worship services in the hospital unabated."

The letter carried no names and was simply endorsed by a group calling itself "Islamic fundamentalists." The group said that it has a strong presence in the hospital and would do everything possible to deal with all Christian health workers there.

The letter has reportedly caused panic at the hospital and prompted institutional authorities to ban all Christian worship activities.

Christiana Shiaki, secretary of the local chapter of the FCN, told Compass that Dr. B.A. Abiminku, medical director and chief executive at Keffi Federal Medical Center, sent the nurses a letter on July 19, 2004, stating that Christian-related activities at the facility had been banned.

"Following the events of last week ... which occurred within the center, Management has decided that Christian religious activities at the center is [sic] suspended in the interim," Abiminku wrote.

Shiaki said the letter also contained a summons for the nurses to meet with hospital management. "On arrival, we were informed that the management has reached a decision based on the threat letter to ban our fellowship in the center indefinitely," she said. "No mention was made [at the meeting] to the threat to our lives as Christians."

Shiaki told Compass that the ban on Christian activities at the hospital denies Christian nurses and other health workers the privilege to exercise their faith as guaranteed by the Constitution of Nigeria.

"We are being discriminated against because we are Christians," she said. "We have not done anything wrong to deserve this. How can they ban us from praying or worshiping here when the Muslims have two mosques built with public funds for them here in the hospital?"

Shiaki also said that for the past five years, the Christian community at the hospital has been pleading for space to build a chapel to serve health workers and patients, but the request had been turned down.

Nigeria's chapter of the FCN was established in 1960, the year the country attained independence from Britain. The fellowship is affiliated with the Nurses Christian Fellowship International, headquartered in Scotland.

According to a report released last week by the Associated Press, violence between Muslims and Christians in central Nigeria over the last three years has left more than 53,000 people dead. A government-appointed committee said 53,787 people had died in Plateau state alone between September 2001 and May 2004.

Most of the casualties have been Christians killed in riots and militia attacks carried out by radical Muslim groups. Evidence is emerging that shows the Muslim militias receive foreign funding to purchase weapons and material. The militias often mount attacks from neighboring countries, such as Niger and Chad, which have large Muslim populations.

Hindu 'Reconversions' continue in India

Satya Kumar

DELHI (Compass) – At least 336 tribal Christians were "reconverted" to Hinduism on October 17 in a mass ceremony organized by the World Hindu Council in Orissa, India.

The ceremony took place in the remote village of Baridia in Sundargarh district, about 280 miles west of Bhubaneswar, the state capital of Orissa. Those who decided to change their religion belonged to several nearby villages.

"It was the largest purification program carried out by us," Gauri Prasad Rath, state secretary of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), or World Hindu Council, told Compass.

"Three hundred and thirty-six people from 80 families who had been lured to become Christians were brought back to Hinduism."

Indian Christian leaders expressed shock and dismay at the incident.

"This is nothing but a vicious and hostile hate campaign launched by the VHP," said John Dayal, president of the All India Catholic Union, the largest Christian body in India. "We've told the state government several times about this hate campaign."

Eyewitnesses said VHP leaders arrived in large numbers to collect the villagers. They then held a mass yagna, or Hindu fire ceremony. "Holy water" was sprinkled on the Christians, who numbered 144 men, 117 women, 44 boys and 31 girls.

A picture of the Hindu goddess Durga, along with traditional wrap-around garments and saris, were given to the Christians who converted to Hinduism.

District police chief Y.K. Jethwa said the district collector had informed him of the ceremony before it took place.

"The (converts) also gave affidavits," he said. "All of them had given prior intimation to the district administration about their intention to embrace Hinduism."

The Orissa Freedom of Religion Act requires any person wishing to change his or her religion to give a written affidavit to the local administration.

Most Christian leaders oppose the Religion Act, characterizing it as an "anti-conversion law."

"What is this thing called 're-conversion?'" Dayal said. "The church says man cannot make anybody change his faith. I can only tell you about God's path. It's for you to make up your mind.

"When they convert to Christianity, it's the work of the Holy Spirit."

Dayal also said the tribals who were being re-converted to Hinduism were not originally Hindus. Many of India's tribal groups were originally animists – worshiping the sun or nature – but not traditional Hindus.

"We believe that tribals have their own faiths," Dayal explained. "So if we are converting them, we are converting them from whatever their religion was, not from Hinduism.

"And when the VHP says it is 're-converting' them, they are actually converting them to Hinduism and are doing it forcibly."

Rath dismissed Dayal's arguments and charged the missionaries with "cheating" the tribals. "They tell the poor tribals that there is lot of superstition in Hinduism. They lure them with rice and money and jobs. They have also grabbed land."

Rath also claimed the tribals had made the decision of their own accord. "These people had contacted us themselves; we did not go to them," he insisted.

However, he conceded that most of the people who claimed to be Christians and then re-converted were not actively practicing the Christian faith. "Some had been going to church; some were not."

Rath said the VHP would continue their reconversion drive until the missionaries ceased their evangelistic programs.

This was the second reconversion drive launched by the VHP in recent weeks. In September, 75 tribal Christians were re-converted in a similar manner in Mayurbhanj district, site of the brutal murder of Australian missionary Graham Staines and his two sons in January 1999.

Many senior VHP leaders attended the ceremony, which lasted for several hours and included elaborate rituals. Speeches were also made through the public address system in the village, warning tribals to keep away from the missionaries.

The VHP claims missionaries are converting tribals in one third of the districts in Orissa. To counter this, VHP members are now staging regular awareness campaigns in villages, reading passages from the Hindu holy book Gita and preaching sermons against Christianity.

"The only long-term solution is that all these people should come back to Hinduism," Rath concluded.

Orissa has one of the highest concentrations of Hindu extremists in India, and Christian communities throughout the state have suffered numerous attacks, the Staines' murder being the most notorious example.

Reflections

Season of the dead

Dirk Schouten

Twenty years ago this September, three teenagers who were students at the Christian high school I attended died in a head-on collision with a truck. They were siblings, and two were in my Grade 10 class. The morning after the tragedy, a Thursday, the entire student-body gathered in the gymnasium for an assembly. Students were beside themselves with grief. At the podium, the vice-principal read the poetry of Paul, asking, "Oh death, where is your victory? Oh death, where is your sting?" while he looked ready to keel over, his face red with pain, his voice shaking. We were told there would be no school for the rest of the week and that buses would bring us home right after the assembly. By 11:00 a.m., I was alone in our house, wondering how I would spend the rest of the day.

Some time after the accident, the older brother of the dead students almost died as well. It was like God was taunting us. Apparently, something got lodged in his throat while he was eating, and he had to be rushed to hospital. Things got worse by the hour. My church, along with other congregations in the Niagara peninsula, held a prayer service. It was the only time in my youth I felt absolutely convinced of the need to attend church. I don't remember what was said, but the prayers were intense. It was our communal way of telling God that this was too much.

The young man didn't die. He pulled through. Some people claimed a miracle had occurred. The odds being what they were, there was no other way to explain it; he should have passed away.

During those strange days, I witnessed things I had never seen before – adults crying like kids, students fainting from emotional and physical fatigue, huge crowds of mourners. It was a lot to process for a 15-year-old. The funeral for the students was dream-like. It didn't seem to be really taking place.

Of my memories of that September, one stands out. It is the memory of what happened to me after I returned home from school on Thursday. With no one else in the house, I took some change from my bedroom and biked to town, to the Grimsby Sub Shop, where I sat down and began to play my favorite video game, Galaga. I played it regularly. I could get 300,000 points on a single quarter.

"Why aren't you in school?" the shop's owner said after taking a seat in the chair on the other side of the tabletop. She had four children and ran the sub shop with her husband. I was a regular, and she knew me. I told her why I wasn't in school. While aliens fired bombs at my starship fighter, I told her that three students from my high school had died in a head-on collision the previous afternoon.

At that time – 20 years ago – I thought her response was odd. I wouldn't now. Instead of returning to the kitchen, she sat with me for an hour. She just sat while I played. Every few minutes, she asked me a question about the dead students or about my high school. A few times, I looked up and caught her shaking her head, whispering, "Oh, my God." But she never got up. She stayed with me until I was done. What I'll never know is whether she stayed for my sake or her own.

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On October 12, I thought about a young woman named Meghan Heffernan. I knew her during the two years I lived in Pusan, South Korea. Like me, she taught ESL. We were both members of a small church of ex-patriots.

Meghan came from Anchorage, Alaska. She said the only noteworthy thing about the state is the stuffed Grizzly bear that stands in the foyer of Anchorage's international airport.

"Once you've seen that bear, you may as well leave," she said. "That's all there is in that place."

To look at Meghan was to see a person you'd swear had been to Woodstock. Colorful dresses flowed down her willowy frame and long, beaded necklaces swung from her neck. She had her own sense of hygiene, too; she shaved her legs and armpits only when, in her words, things got out of hand.

Other than being English teachers, Meghan and I had little in common, especially when it came to matters of faith. She belonged to a non-denominational church back in the U.S. and preferred the praise-and-worship component of the service. I liked the preaching.

"You call yourself a *what*?" she once asked me.

"A Calvinist," I said. "A Dutch Calvinist. Meg, you're a Christian and you have a bachelor's degree in the humanities. How can you not know what a Calvinist is?"

"Whatever," she said, and looked away.

One afternoon, a bunch of us got together a meal. Meghan arrived late, wearing shorts that exposed a pair of lean, muscular, uncharacteristically smooth legs.

"Sorry I'm late," she said. "I decided to wear shorts, but I knew I had to shave my legs first. Trust me, you should all be grateful I did."

I liked her humor but was more impressed by this sudden manifestation of beauty.

"Don't take this the wrong way, Meg," I said, "but those are the most beautiful legs I have ever seen."

It was a risk, but it went over well. The room exploded in praise for Meghan's "running legs."

In mid-October of 2002, Meghan and a bunch of friends flew to Bali, Indonesia, for vacation. On a Saturday evening, they made plans to hit the town. A few decided to stay in the hotel to nap. The others went to check out the island's famous shopping and nightclub districts.

An email from a friend a few days later described what had happened. I was in Vancouver at the time, aware that a car bomb in Bali had killed almost 200 and leveled the downtown core. The email informed me that Meghan was missing, and that her friends in South Korea had assumed the worst. Another email followed; officials had found a corpse and were using dental records to confirm it was Meghan's body. A final email informed me of the how the church of ex-patriots – my old church – had organized a memorial service. I found out about the death of a friend – and responded to it – without talking to a soul. It was all done over the Internet.

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Three weeks ago, my wife and I slept in a Manhattan apartment a mile from Ground Zero. That evening, our hosts pointed from the bedroom window to the island's financial district, to where the twin towers had reached to the sky. I didn't know a cluster of residential apartment buildings exists so close to where the towers once stood. I thought of the thousands of New Yorkers who, from their homes, watched as the buildings crumbled. While others ran for their lives, all they did was close the window.

The next day, we stood at the site. I looked up at the sky to see where the towers had taken up space. I tried to feel the horror of three years ago, but couldn't. Tourists walked around, looking at the large, deep hole – now a rebuilding project – mostly without comment.

Ground Zero is an odd place because it has lost its status as a graveyard. It will remain something else – a mood, a feeling, a religion – until the new buildings are finished. It has also been claimed for commercial purposes. While there, you can pick your choice of $5 commemorations – 9/11 photo albums, T-shirts, posters, bracelets – or, a few yards from the hole, buy a hot dog and a pop. A plaque honoring the 2,900 dead also predicts the successful rebuilding of the towers and the ultimate victory of the American spirit over global terrorism. It promotes a black and white view of the world, good guys beating bad guys, with Coca-Cola sponsoring the battle.

A transition is taking place in a corner of southwest Manhattan, yet a large crater and the utter uselessness of 22 acres of New York City real estate still speak to something awful that happened.

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I used to believe tragedy was part of a grand scheme of things, even if the reasons it occurred could not be understood. I believed this out of loyalty to the doctrine of the sovereignty of God and because, by nature, I have an appreciation for the dramatic and awesome. I never realized the thin shade of difference between this view and one that states that God ushers tragedy in, though I saw my own as containing mystery, the latter as purely insensitive and sentimental.

I'm a bit older now, and less worried about the absolutes I was taught metaphysics has to provide. But that doesn't mean I don't search for meaning in human suffering. I do. I just don't find it – or need to find it – as easily.

Sure, we depend on big answers, but it's often in the confusion that tragedy brings – rather than in our struggle to understand it – that our common humanity is galvanized. It's unfortunate that death is one of the few things that have the power to do this to us. When no explanation can be given, when clarity can't be offered, our pretences are stripped away and we are left

Continued on page 11...

Reflections

On Location
Theresa Miedema

The Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ – globalized for more than two millennia

After a brief reprieve from writing about globalization, I would like to return ever so briefly to this subject. The excitement surrounding globalization sometimes strikes me as being very ironic where Christians are concerned. After all, our home Kingdom has been globalized for over two millennia. We should be accustomed to the idea that we belong to a Kingdom without borders – a Kingdom that truly stretches from east to west, from shore to shore, from the greatest heights to the greatest depths.

Our citizenship lies first and foremost in the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. This Kingdom presently lies more within us than outside of us. That is to say, this Kingdom is not made of brick and mortar, borders and boundaries. But it is real nonetheless. It is being built within each of us as we learn more about how to follow our Lord and King in our everyday lives.

The Kingdom of our Lord is not like other kingdoms or states in this world. This Kingdom is not bound by geography. Nor is it confined to one particular ethnic group. No one has the monopoly on citizenship in this Kingdom. We are bound together as co-citizens not by our ethnic heritage or geography or economic class. We are bound together by Christ Jesus, who has promised that his Kingdom will be made up from every tribe, nation, and tongue on earth.

What a marvelous promise!

Recently, I was witness to one event that demonstrated in a very real way how this promise is being fulfilled. At an evening service at my church, we commissioned Rev. Dr. Paul McLean as a missionary charged with translating the Old Testament into the Hakka language.

The Hakka people currently make up about 13% of the population of Taiwan. Only a very small handful of the Hakka are Christian even though mission work has been ongoing in Taiwan for about 140 years. Evangelism has been difficult in the absence of a Bible in the native tongue of the Hakka people. In 1995, a translation of the New Testament and Psalms was completed, an answer to the prayers of many who love the Hakka. But a Hakka translation of the entire Bible still does not exist.

The commissioning of Dr. McLean is an answer to the prayers of those who have petitioned God for help in reaching the Hakka population. It is also evidence of God's providence and his desire that all people on this earth hear the good news about Jesus. God's Kingdom is a wonderfully diverse body of people from all places and backgrounds. Each day, through the work of Bible translators and missionaries here and abroad, the Kingdom is being opened to all people.

We would do well to bear the diverse character of our home Kingdom in mind. We live in the age of the nation-state. We identify ourselves at least in part by our national identity. We cheer for our country's team during the Olympics. We want our country to flourish, to grow economically, to be a strong and stable political unit. These goals are not inherently wrong or evil.

Nevertheless, we must guard against nationalistic jingoism and the pursuit of unadulterated national self-interest. That which binds us together with others around the world is far greater than that which binds together with our own national compatriots. Citizens of the Kingdom of our Lord take their marching orders from God, who has told us that we are "to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God"(Micah 6:8b). Our relationships with others at the individual, local, and national level must be mediated with justice and love.

We are bound to others, both near and far, by our responsibility to seek justice. We must seek just relations with other states in all matters, including trade, the environment, and disputes of all kinds. At a state level, our concern should not be national advancement, but just relations with other countries. Our Kingdom is global, and our concern for justice should also be global.

We ought also to show concern for our co-citizens in other countries. There are many Christians around the world who suffer for their faith. There are many countries in which Christians face physical danger as a result of their beliefs. In some cases, a decision to give one's life to Christ means that one will be cut off from family and friends.

Closer to the home front, we should remember our co-citizens who must stand up for their beliefs in the boardrooms of corporations and other workplaces. We must remember the teenagers who face ridicule from their peers because of their beliefs and the university students who face an academic community that is hostile to all matters of faith, not to mention blue collar workers who do not find that their coworkers are very receptive to their efforts to live a godly life. We must make special intercession for our fellow citizens of the Kingdom.

Let me share with you one of the wonderful reasons that I love being a citizen in the Kingdom. Our citizenship binds us together with our co-citizens around the world. It is not a citizenship of exclusion, but one that embraces newcomers with open arms. This citizenship is free to all who want it, and membership truly does have its privileges. It is a citizenship that overcomes differences. The bond we have in Christ is larger than our cultural, geographic, ethnic, or economic differences. I have an instant bond with any one of my co-citizens even if we do not speak the same language, for we worship the same God, we are of the same body, we eat the same loaf and we drink of the same cup.

Our citizenship also binds us together with fellow citizens throughout the ages. God's Kingdom is ex-temporal – it is not bound by time just as it is not bound by space. My citizenship is shared by my ancestors and will be shared by future generations. My citizenship is shared by great men and women of the faith and by Biblical figures. I look forward to the day when I may return home to the presence of the King and when I may meet those who have gone on before me. I look forward to hearing their stories about the building of the Kingdom in their lives.

In this age of ethnic conflict, where so much bloodshed has resulted from perceptions of difference, it is good to belong to a Kingdom where differences are muted by our shared bond in Christ. In this age of the nation, it is good to put aside national self-interest and to take up our global responsibility to do justice. In this time when people fear globalization, it is good to remember that we already belong to a globalized Kingdom that is stronger than any power that the world has to offer. In this time when so many people feel rootless and lost, it is good to remember that we have an identity and a home in the Kingdom of Christ.

The Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ – Globalized for over two millennia! Membership indeed has its privileges. Don't wait to process your application for citizenship – do it today.

...**Season** *continued*

with nothing but our need for God and the people who love us.

Maybe that's why the owner of that sub shop realized she had to sit with me for an hour, though she spoke less than four sentences. Maybe that's why so few people talk at Ground Zero. Maybe that's why this autumn, I thought about the dead I once knew, though I had nothing illuminating to say about them.

A former teacher of mine once said that we can't explain tragedy, that we undermine its horror and tempt cheap theology when we try. I agree. There are only a few things we can do when it strikes, and they're no different than what we do every day. We work and pray and try to be a comfort to each other.

I'm still hung up on clotheslines

Catherine R. Clarke

I don't know why the carpenter was so reluctant when I asked for a five-foot clothesline along the side of our new patio. "If you can put up some tight lattice behind it," I added, "that will keep things like stockings from whipping in the sea breeze."

"Well, I guess I could," he said reflectively, rubbing the tip of his nose with the back of his hand. "But nobody ever asked me to do such a thing before."

Didn't he know that every woman needs a clothesline? I could hardly remember a time without one.

In the farmyard of my childhood, long rows of sheets, towels, dresses, aprons, shirts, overalls, and underclothes billowed toward the sky on hot summer afternoons. In winter, they froze stiff as boards. The long underwear looked like cutouts of the people who wore them. The sheets crackled as though they might break at every crease. The ice whitened them like bleach.

When we moved to a nearby village, our lines were uncomfortably close to a neighbor. She complained that Mother hung tattered cleaning cloths just where her family had to look at them. Yet that same neighbor's pig made hanging clothes on our side of the fence a very smelly chore. Mother moved the offending rags, but their pig remained.

My teenage sense of justice was outraged. Why should one neighbor concede everything and the other nothing? My wiser, more tolerant mother only said in her firm yet quiet way, "My dear, you know I wouldn't have trouble over a little thing like a clothesline or a pig."

My married life began in an apartment house on the outskirts of Cairo, Egypt. I had only a secondhand wringer-washer. The bathtub was used for rinsing. To dry our clothes, my new husband strung clotheslines on one of our three balconies. It was shielded from the sand-spiked wind, and it was high enough to protect our clothes from the Bedouins' goats that were herded past each day. The only problem: the walls that supported the line were soft and crumbly. I never knew when I would find all the heavy wet sheets and towels on the gritty concrete floor.

Later, when we moved to Hawaii, I learned what a joy drying clothes outdoors could be. The posts that held the taut lines were set firmly in rock-hard lava soil. As I pinned garments in place, my view was of pure blue sky, exotic flowers, and the verdant slope of a mountain so close that we called it our own.

We returned to North America in 1961, and the Space Age had begun. In the spirit of embracing technology, we bought a dryer. But beside it, in our basement, Bob strung two short lines for delicate laundry. By then I had turned from using the doll-shaped pins of Grandma's era to the more efficient spring-style ones.

Still, the reason for keeping a basketful of them was the same. A clothesline is indispensable – even if it's only five feet from the end of a patio.

Short Story

A thief in the night

Ron de Boer

I remember him as clearly as if he were speaking to me this morning. There we were, a dozen or so ten year-olds sitting at the tables around the room, listening wide-eyed to our Sunday school teacher. No longer were we tracing our fingers over the hardened gum under the Sunday school tables; no longer were we trying to decipher the "John Loves Rita" and "Falcons Rule" carvings from years gone by on the top of the tables.

The Sunday school teacher in his blue blazer and matching pants, his wide knotted tie with Niagara Falls cascading down the front was looking each of us in the eye with this dire warning: "One day Jesus is going to come back." He said it with the urgency of a man who expected it to happen before Trudeau gave up politics.

"There will be no trumpets blowing," he said. "There will be no weatherman telling you He's coming in like a storm," he said. "There will be no news report telling you He was in the United States this morning and would be crossing over the border into Canada soon." The vein on his temple was pulsing.

"No, Jesus will come back like a thief in the night. You can't plan for it, but you must always be ready." He looked us each in the eye again. "Will your house be in order? Will you be prepared to go to heaven? Or will you be in the middle of a swear word or a nasty joke?"

We emerged that morning from the dark basement of the old church squinting into the sun to find our parents. I'll admit I was shaking. Would Jesus come back today? Would he come back while I was sleeping? What if he came back when I was right in the middle of thinking about Charlotte, the girl on the school bus who I liked? What if he came back when I was slashing a Chatsworth player on the shins with my hockey stick?

Not long after learning the world could come to and end any day now, I noticed our minister actually ended every congregational prayer with, "Come quickly, Lord, come quickly." It was as if he was pleading.

I'll admit I didn't want Jesus to come too quickly. In fact, I wanted him to take his sweet time. Maybe wait until about 2050 or so when I was good and ready to go – not after putting in a mere decade on this globe. Life was just getting interesting. Why should everyone since the day Jesus ascended into heaven be able to have a great time on earth and grow old and not me? If he came back, would I be ten years old in heaven forever or would I at least get to become a teenager and enjoy shaving for a few years?

This was around the same time when those little black and white cartoon tracts about the end of times were circling around. You've seen them. The size of a Post-it note, you'd open up one of these tracts and a normal-looking family would be in their backyard gardening or playing baseball when suddenly a cloud parted and Jesus descended to the earth. The tracts usually focused on one person who was taken up to the pearly gates, shown his life of sin and told he was going straight to hell because he wasn't ready when Jesus returned. The tracts' purpose was to warn us to get our lives in order.

Another popular story told in the 70s along these lines concerned the Rapture. The Rapture would occur, bringing to an end the world as we know it today, and the pictures that followed were of a field worker suddenly realizing his fellow worker was gone or of a husband waking up to find his wife's side of the bed empty. There was even a popular song sung in religious circles in those days called, *I wish we'd all been ready*; it went:

A man and wife asleep in bed
She hears a noise and turns her head
he's gone I wish we'd all been ready
Two men walking up a hill
One disappears and one's left standing still
I wish we'd all been ready
There's no time to change your mind
The Son has come and you've been left behind.

The words and music were haunting to me. I didn't want to wake up to an empty house. Today, this theme continues with the popular Left Behind series of novels by Tim Lahaye and Jerry Jenkins.

As I got older, my worry about Jesus coming back began to wear off. I started shaving, noticed this girl named Karen in English class and began checking out university options. Some years later, a wedding took place and little girls started arriving at my house. I busied myself with teaching and parenting and am now fast approaching middle age.

Still no Jesus.

Jesus will come like a thief in the night. You can't plan for it, but you must always be ready.

It's funny how a lesson isn't completed until years later. This summer I found out exactly what the Sunday school teacher meant and what that Bible passage from Ephesians means.

This summer, a thief came into my house while my family slept and vanished without a trace with several purses, some other items and my van.

We woke up on a cool Monday morning in August to discover our patio door had been forced open. Some of our belongings had been strewn on the deck. Our motion light had been disconnected. And a five foot long crow bar lay on the grass in my back yard.

The contrast of the night-time violation and the beautiful morning sunlight and singing birds was surreal.

We immediately ran down the hall to the bedrooms of our sleeping girls. Thankfully they were asleep and safe. All the money our little girls had ever saved up had been stolen. Everyone's purse had been taken, including Karen's.

By the time we had cancelled our credit cards, over a thousand dollars had been charged to them. They took various electronic items. They stole our van.

And it all happened while we slept.

The police arrived later in the morning. They finger-printed the crow bar and took photographs of the damaged patio door, but told us they'd never catch the thief. The lock guy came later in the afternoon to re-key our house since our house keys had been taken. The insurance guy came later in the day to list our stolen items. When the dust had settled that evening, we sat in our kitchen and told ourselves over and over again how impossible it was that someone had come into our house, walked around, and taken our stuff without our ever hearing a sound.

Jesus will come back like a thief in the night.

We, of course, immediately began shopping for a dog. We also looked into a security system, new lights to illuminate our backyard, and a brand new patio door with a dead-bolt lock. We began putting valuables in safe places at bedtime; we hid the keys; we made sure all purses were not visible from the windows when the sun went down. For three weeks following the theft, I woke up with a start at 3:00 a.m., thinking I had heard a noise in the kitchen.

If the thief came again, we'd be ready.

But, of course, the thief has not come back. He never comes when you expect him to come. He comes when you least suspect him.

Unless, of course, you are always ready.

But time repairs our emotional wounds. Lately I've been sleeping more soundly again. The other morning I noticed I had left the keys on the counter – right where they had been stolen last time. I noticed one of the girls' new purses hanging on a kitchen chair again at bed time.

We're getting busy with a new school and church year. We're beginning to forget about the thief in the night.

I'm guessing I don't have to explain the metaphor here. The one good thing that has come out of the theft is that it has served as a teachable moment about both Ephesians and the Old Testament stories about the Israelites.

The other night at supper, I found myself staring into each of the girls' eyes and heard my voice saying, *Jesus will come like a thief in the night. You can't plan for it, but you must always be ready.* I then illustrated our thief – that faceless, nameless entity who has become part of the fabric of our family's history – and how he came and went when we least expected he would – while we were all home sleeping.

It was the fifteen year-old who said *we can't live our lives like we're going to be robbed every night.* We impressed upon her the need to stay awake, to always be ready and never to forget that one day Jesus will be coming back. "Will you be ready?" my Sunday school teacher voice said again.

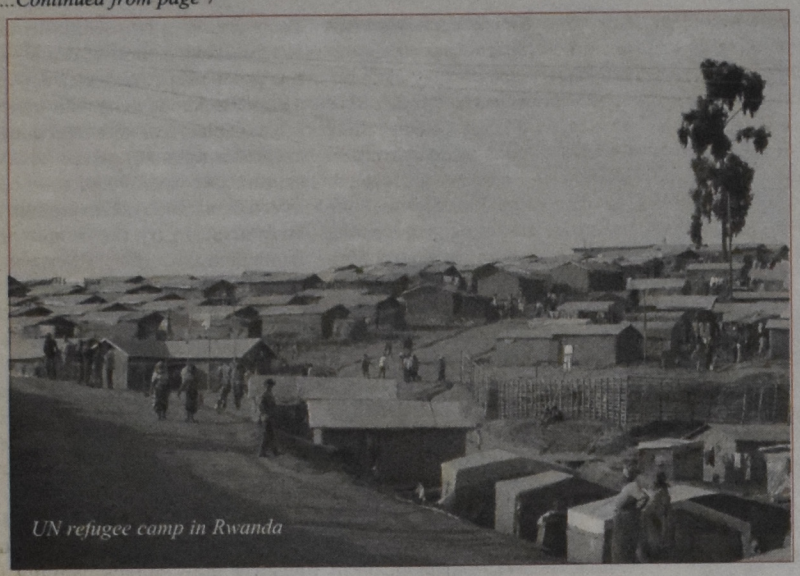
A few weeks later we were reading our family devotional about the Israelites wandering in the desert. Time and time again they forgot God and began worshiping false gods. God would re-enter their world with

See **Thief** *on page 15...*

WAKE UP, HONEY! I HEAR SOMEONE DOWN-STAIRS!
CLUNK
CAREFUL, DEAR. YOU MIGHT BREAK SOMETHING!
YAWN!
BACK ALREADY?
WELL? WHO WAS IT?
I DUNNO... HE SAID HIS NAME WAS JESUS....

Refugees

...Continued from page 7



UN refugee camp in Rwanda

What has all this produced in the end for Canada? More arrests? More deportations based on security/criminality issues? Not at all. On the contrary, a study of refugees in "limbo," commissioned in 2001 by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, found that of two thousand cases screened, only one had any basis at all for a refusal based on security concerns or criminality. It is a known fact that any competent criminal or terrorist would steer clear of Canada's refugee determination system, and would choose another form of entry. Many whom Canada seeks to keep out of its borders arrive surreptitiously and are unfortunately not intercepted – perhaps due to resources being tied up in less-than-productive hyper-caution about refugees.

"Limbo" tends to be a burden also on the Canadian economy. Government services to refugees in limbo, including health and social support, have been increasing. It is, of course, harder for newcomers to find employment when they lack permanent resident status. The "opportunity costs" to the government from unearned taxes and reduced economic activity are substantial.

The effects on the applicant are worse still. Mental illness, criminality as an outcome of frustration and poverty, and re-traumatization of victims of persecution or torture are but some of the unpleasant consequences of limbo. Often, applicants face heightened levels of anxiety about loved ones living at great risk overseas. Until permanent resident status is granted, IRB-accepted refugees cannot bring their families to join them in Canada.

Notwithstanding the evidence, CIC continues to place many lives "on hold" with its long drawn-out, repetitive, post-hearing investigations.

Citizens for Public Justice advocates a change of policy that would avoid the second set of tests and screenings, the post-hearing set that is so burdensome to refugees. Claimants whose claims have been processed by the Immigration and Refugee Board should be granted permanent resident status upon acceptance as protected persons. Yes, there should be screening, but not two sets of screening. The investigations that take place before the IRB hearing should suffice.

Anything short of this is an avoidance by Canada of the rights and obligations that should be conferred upon a refugee as described in the international Convention regarding the status of refugees, which Canada has signed.

Is this alternative a responsible one? Yes, it is. Harmonizing the screening processes and granting permanent residence upon determination of refugee status would meet the requirements of all concerned. For cases where the first screening surfaces some concerns about security, a presumption of landing (granting permanent resident status) should be made within a year if no grounds for inadmissibility have been discovered by that time.

Conceptually, to recognize a person as a refugee according to the criteria of international law already binds a state to offer protection. (The term "protected person" is used synonymously with "Convention refugee" in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, July 2002.) Expressing this recognition by simultaneously granting permanent resident status would give the protected person the legal right and equal status he or she needs to begin the long effort of integration. For Canada to make this change would provide much needed leadership on the global stage in the treatment of protected persons.

** Chris Pullenayegem is refugee policy analyst with the national faith-based public policy organization Citizens for Public Justice (www.cpj.ca).*

Reflections on Stewardship

Rick DeGraaf

Gifted by God: my trees

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. Gen. 2:15

Our stewardship of the earth has two aspects to it: using and caring. God entrusted his new creation to mankind 'to work [use] it and take care of it.'

When you read the September 2004 issue of *National Geographic* on global warming or the June issue with articles on our energy appetite or read a host of other books and periodicals, you can really get depressed. As custodians of God's garden called earth, we have to recognize that we're big on 'use' to the point of 'abuse'. Our 'caring' record isn't any better, as scientists tell us that more species are disappearing, deserts are growing, ice caps and glaciers are receding, the climate is becoming more violent and we can't even agree on a protocol to reduce CO2 emissions. Read the literature, search the web – yet many of us are still in denial and rather not think about it – until it hurts us economically.

That's the global picture. Closer to home, our energy consumption continues to grow in step with the power and size of our vehicles and homes. Commuting distances have also increased as well as the number of commuters that overwhelm our road system. More of our goods are consumables: replaced and wasted rather than repairable and more durable.

Is conservation and durability not a factor anymore? Maybe we think it's okay because we are at least re-cycling and composting more. But is it enough? There is still a growing problem of waste – so much that we simply throw away!

As Christians, let's not argue these points or get involved in the blame-game. I recall being involved in a testy argument with others as 'the Christian missionary enterprise' was being blamed for the deforestation and desertification of Africa. But instead of arguing or excusing ourselves or bemoaning the sad state affairs of our environmental stewardship, let's be on the forefront of solutions. Steven Bouma-Prediger, in his book "for the beauty of the earth … a christian vision for creation care" makes the case that "To care for the earth is integral to our Christian faith (p. 14)." Simply put: back to Genesis 2:15.

So what can you and I do about it? Maybe we're just a small minority – but we can model a better way. Let's:

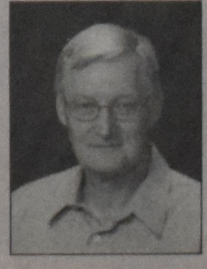
- **Be prudent consumers:** reduce consumption, make more durable and longer lasting choices, repair if possible instead of wasting and replacing, live closer to work (close enough to walk or bike or take transit), and consider the environmental impact of purchase decisions (even if the $ cost is more). Reduce…Re-use…Recycle!
- **Consider lifestyle choices.** Sure you can afford to buy the 'biggie size' car, house, cottage, motorhome, SUV etc. – but is it stewardly in the light of environmental impact (not even reflecting on the injustice and poverty issues)? There's tremendous freedom in living simply.
- **Share:** Let others be blest by your home/farm, business, or cottage. Car pool and use transit where possible. One does not need to own it to enjoy it. See the smiles on someone else's face as you share your bounty.
- **Enjoy the best things:** God's beautiful creation. Turn off the electronic entertainment and the 'spin doctors' and just enjoy God's handiwork. Breathe it, walk it, touch it, smell it and watch it in the minutest or grandest detail. The exercise alone will do you good!
- **Be vocal:** Write. Lobby. Vote. Let our governments know that we are all accountable for the choices we make concerning our environment. Participate in local movements that are also trying to urge better resource use and protection for the environment.

Stewardly Tip: Block heaters

Winter's coming. Time to plug in the block heaters especially for diesel powered equipment. Save energy by using timers to turn them on only an hour or two before you need them. Or for 24 hour standby equipment (generators) consider rigging up a thermostatically controlled outlet so that the heaters only turn on when the temperature drops below a certain set point (if interested, ask us for details).

Readers: We want to share your 'Stewardly Tips' so that we all can do our part to make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Please write or email or visit the CC website. Please leave your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or, if we need to, we can ask you for more details.

Next issue:
Gifted by God:
My Treasures



Rick DeGraaf works for Christian Stewardship Services in Markham, Ontario Rick's email: rickd@csservices.ca

The Lord's Prayer

Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors (Part 1)

J.H. Sillevis Smitt
Translated by Jack Van Meggelen

We are made of a body and soul, and these two work together inseparably. That's not surprising because together they form one whole person. Yet for long periods of time we humans have neglected the interrelatedness of the physical and spiritual in one person.

Nowadays some eyes are opened to see the influence between the psychological and the physical. We are also discovering that a person can get physically ill from spiritual and/or psychological causes.

In the Lord's Prayer Jesus lets our physical needs come first. First our bodily needs then our soul's satisfaction. When a person is hungry you shouldn't first preach to him; not a tract, but a meal is what that person needs. When people are in pain or worried, it is necessary to approach them very compassionately when dealing with their spiritual well-being. When the body is in dire need it is difficult to touch the soul.

People who visit the sick know this. That's why it is so sad that so many people postpone the most important issues in life to the end. During our last days, most of us are not in a position to dwell on the needs of the soul. When death comes, our consciousness often fails, our speech becomes slurred, and our thought clouded. In such a crisis, we are overwhelmed by our needs. We can be so overcome by pain, so tired by fear, that little room is left for reflection or thought.

When a person is hungry one must give him bread. Giving the hungry a tract with spiritual comfort is like giving stones for bread, no matter how good the pamphlet. But it is also true that you cannot live on bread alone. We are more than bodies, we are also souls.

Our greatest need

Hunger is a mighty sword. When that sword is at our throat we want only one thing: to deflect the point of that sword. When hunger starts to consume people, unless they are unusually strong spiritually, it can turn them into beasts of prey. When the body starts to dictate its needs, sin is close at hand. That is why, when Jesus had completed forty days of fasting in the desert, the evil one's first temptation was to suggest to Jesus that he turn stones into bread. Satan figured that since he gets most people that way, he could probably also get Jesus to succumb.

William Blake's Illustration in Pilgrim's Progress

When hunger threatens your life all other needs take a back seat. Even your sexual drive is silenced. There remains only one thought – to still our hunger pangs.

However, there is one desire that is stronger than hunger: the need to calm a guilty conscience. If hunger can be called a sword, a guilty conscience is a burning fire. Jesus calls guilt an unquenchable fire. There is an inner connection between an empty stomach and a guilty conscience. The stomach and soul both crave satisfaction.

Let me illustrate:

Behind all of life's afflictions lies the problem of our guilt.

We were sinners before we became beggars.

We are not just poor, we are basically corrupt.

There would be no poverty if there were no sin.

Even the earth carries the curse because we are fallen human beings. In Genesis 3 we read that God told Adam, "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you...." In other words, we have to work to avoid chaos and keep the jungle at bay.

We are not just poor souls who deserve compassion, we are also guilty sinners in need of grace. Jesus not only instructs us to pray humbly for our daily bread, but to follow this with a plea for the forgiveness of our debts.

The heavy burden

You probably know the Charles Dickens, Christmas story, *A Christmas Carol*. Remember how the ghost of Marley comes to Scrooge, pulling a heavy chain behind him. That's not a dream, that is reality for all of us. A sin is quickly committed, but that does not mean it is over and done with. All our sins stick to the surface of our being like a crust of fear and dread. Dreadful because such fear is made up of a miserable mixture of shame and guilt.

No accusations are as painful as self-accusations. If I despise myself even when I am respected by others, I am worse off than if others despise me when I know myself to be innocent. No criticism is as devastating as self-reproach.

Everyone has a "past." Like Marley, we all drag a chain behind us. That chain is made up of carelessness, indiscretion, tactlessness and disrespect – all of which we are quick to note in others. We were silent when we should have spoken up, or we talked too much when we should have been silent. The chain of our guilt is made up of links that reflect our waywardness, rebelliousness, selfishness and obsessions.

For some of us these observations may strike home. Long after an event has been forgotten, our conscience can suddenly trigger a shameful memory. Remorse can burden us like a deadweight. It can impair our freedom, destroy our serenity and sap our strength.

How do we get rid of these sins and how will our guilt be removed? I believe we have three options, two of which are dead-ends. But the third option is the way that leads to real freedom.

Committing sin is a grave and hazardous thing, but more serious than sin itself are its consequences. It can lead to desperation, or to indifference.

I mentioned three ways. The first two are the roads of forgetfulness and repression, or guilt and recrimination. But only the third option leads to repentance and forgiveness. First, people are, generally speaking, incapable of looking at their own guilt and sinfulness with any honesty. They fear it will lead to loss of self-esteem and confidence. Overwhelmed by self-doubt, they would find it impossible to go on.

Have you ever noticed that people are the best lawyers in their own defence? No lawyer could do a better job of clearing your name than you yourself given half a chance. While others may not be able to produce extenuating circumstances on our behalf, we are masters at devising a thousand and one excuses for our actions.

This universal defence system harbors a universal truth: people are not inclined to face the fact of their own evil behavior. We usually refuse, indeed, we are afraid to declare ourselves guilty. That's why we are all undisputed masters of our own self-righteousness. Let's face it, self justification is bred in the bone.

The first thing someone who steals does is to be silent. Silence is a cover-up, a form of denial or repression. But covering up evil is a very dangerous thing. Our inner selves cannot deal with repression any better than our eye can tolerate dirt. Our eyes would soon be infected; our inner selves are similarly affected by the denial of wrongdoing.

Sin and guilt are dangerous. Repression and denial can lead to inner tensions and ultimately to emotional and spiritual illness. Most neuroses can be traced back to repressed guilt, or denial of some form of evil or sin. Here too Jesus' words ring true, that only the truth will set you free.

Secondly there is the road called retribution. Somehow we must pay. The histories of all world religions are full of it. Somehow we want to fix things for ourselves. We want to be in charge of our own lives and rebuild the ruin we have become. We want to clean up our own mess; repay our own debts. We attempt to pay for our wrongdoing by doing penance, making all kinds of sacrifices, promises and compensations.

I am afraid that this second road is also a dead-end. Once something is done you can't undo it. Whatever has happened has happened and can't be changed. Once a statement is made it cannot be taken back. The past is past. It is inaccessible, unreachable, irrevocable. And as our guilt grows and our sins begin to haunt us, our need to make amends also increases, becoming progressively more painful yet failing to satisfy.

But there is the third way. The way of repentance and forgiveness. The chain can be broken. We can be freed from guilt and become truly happy and carefree. There is deliverance.

Jesus tells us to hold up our shackled hands towards him, to stretch out our tired arms to our heavenly Father who is full of love and grace. Show God your shackles, your chains. Don't be afraid. One firm handshake from him and you are free.

In this petition, forgive us our debts, Jesus tells us not to be afraid because of our misdeeds. Just stop playing the hiding game, trying to avoid the truth. Don't try to pay for your sins either, but stop torturing yourself with unrealistic sacrifices. God has not attached conditions to his forgiveness and his love. All you have to do is ask

God to forgive you.

It's that simple. Put your anxiety into his hands and you will receive a solution. What we cannot attain nor recover he has already attained and reclaimed. The Bible says that God has removed our transgressions from us as far as the East is from the West. God gives life to what is dead and sets free what now is bound up. Jesus teaches us to pray, "wash me and I will be clean."

When we pray this, it also happens. Sometimes it seems hard to believe that this is really true. Yet in two thousand years of the history of salvation millions upon millions have confessed this central truth in the Apostolic Creed, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." The Gospel promises this truth with absolute clarity and urgency.

Today, the experiences of a multitude of people throughout the world still confirm this truth. Those who pray this prayer with honesty and humility will have that unique experience that sets the prisoner free, causes the oppressed to sing, and exonerates the accused. Those who find God as their Father through the sacrifice of Christ become free and clean from their past and begin to understand the confession that says, "...as if I had never sinned nor been a sinner...."

Just as only food will still our hunger and only water can quench our thirst, so only forgiveness can free us from our sins. Let me use an example to illustrate. Suppose I mistreated someone by insulting and humiliating him. I can put it out of my mind and pretend nothing had happened. When I meet that person again I can pretend that all is okay between us.

I might be able to fool myself into thinking that way, but the victim of such abuse will not see things that way at all. He'd continue to be upset and distrustful.

And my denial or rationalization will not remove my guilt. Then I may try some other way to make amends or 'pay my debt' by becoming extra nice, asking his advice, giving him gifts, complimenting him on his clothes or car and try any old way to be friendly to him. Again I might fool myself this way, but I won't fool the other.

There is only one way things can become right again between us. I have to acknowledge my guilt and confess it to him. I must show remorse and be humiliated just as I humiliated him. I have to take my guilt and place it in his hands and then ask him to forgive me.

I cannot myself remove the evil that I have committed. But the person that I have sinned against can remove such guilt. By taking the risk of giving my guilt to him, I may be forgiven by him. Once the obstacles in our relationship are cleared up, the road to harmony and friendship is reopened and we can again experience freedom and fellowship.

However, we are foolish people who seem keen on perpetuating our foolishness. Who has not discovered that suppressing the truth does not really work and that penance does not liberate us? Yet we constantly try these two ways to overcome our guilt.

Why is this? We refuse to become small. Forgiveness can only be granted when forgiveness is asked. I can only give something when an outstretched hand is extended to me. Those who keep their hands stubbornly behind their back cannot receive anything. We don't want to be the first to give in. We hate admitting that we were wrong. We may be willing to give up much, but the hardest to give up is the conceit and pride of our own hearts.

Yet, there is only one way to salvation, and that is the royal road to freedom through forgiveness. "Praise the Lord, O my soul... for he forgives all your sins."

What is more noble than to forgive an evil committed against us? Why then do we continue to insult our heavenly Father by arrogantly refusing to live by the grace of his forgiveness which he offers freely?

Thief.... *cont. from p. 12*

one wake-up call after another – famine, war – and suddenly they would be defenders of the faith again.

"How can they keep forgetting?" The kids always say.

Think about *our* thief, I say. It's only been *weeks* and already we're forgetting to be on our guard. Imagine *the* thief in the night – Jesus. He's only coming once. We can never forget because, as the songwriter says, we're only getting one chance.

I've actually never liked the image of Jesus as a thief, however accurate the simile is about how we will be surprised by his return. In my mind, he should come back on a cloud surrounded by dazzling lights with the collected symphony orchestras of various cities playing Amazing Grace.

Every media outlet will be present – CNN, Fox News, MSNBC – covering the story to end all stories. Imagine Larry King, the famous interviewer and atheist: "This just in: our affiliates in Bethlehem and Jerusalem have just confirmed that Jesus has in fact returned."

Just then the lights go out and the microphones no longer work. Everyone comes out of their houses and office buildings and looks skyward. Every fan and player at every outdoor sports stadium freezes and looks up; every celebrity in Hollywood emerges from his or her mansion; every homeless person and drug addict on Yonge street or east-end Vancouver gets up off the sidewalk. And everyone just stares heavenward at Jesus, who descends most miraculously for all to see.

Soldiers put down their guns; writers put down their pens; the rich put down their tennis racquets, the sweatshop working children put down their running shoes. Borders disappear. Money disappears. Schools, hospitals and funeral homes disappear.

Whether on a cloud accompanied by a symphony orchestra or as a thief quiet and unassuming, one thing is for certain. He's coming back. Can you hear the voice of my Sunday school teacher? Are you ready?

After the Buzzer

Tim Antonides

Sports with attitude

It's a crisp Saturday fall morning and I'm waiting on Pacific Avenue for a bike shop to open. Since I commute to work for an hour every day, I figure it's time for the bike to get a tune-up. At 10 a.m., the door is unlocked by a young man in full cycling garb, his long locks of knotted hair fluttering in the breeze generated by a fully-amped Linkin Park CD that blares through the shop. Through the din, I yell out to him, "Good morning!"

"What up, man. What ya need, Dude?" he replies.

"I'd like to get my bike tuned up. Oh, and I need some fenders installed too."

"No probs, man. That yours?" He says with a smirk, gesturing at my perfectly acceptable but not-too-sexy Norco 21-speed mountain bike. I nod and he moves it to the back of the shop, picking it up like it's a piece of putrefying tuna.

Next stop is the Vancouver Snow Show, a three-day event at the Convention Centre where you can find just about any kind of skiing/snowboarding equipment imaginable. It's time for me to think about getting some new skis, so I stop in to see what's out there. I walk by a snowboard vendor after a couple of minutes and am accosted by a twenty-something lady in a matching snowboard suit and toque. "How ya doin'? You a boarder?"

"No, I ski," I reply defensively, knowing the response I will get is the same as I've had from some of my students.

"Come on! You gotta get a board! Skiing is, like, so lame. Why don't you, like, ditch the planks and carve it up with a real piece of gear?"

I decline and make my way to where all the lame planks and poles are. Ah, last Saturday was a day of attitude. It wasn't enough to have to sort through a bewildering variety of equipment options to figure out what was actually worth getting. Now I had to listen to a couple of cocky kids tell me how lame and uncool I was.

After school today, I was sitting in on a workshop about verbal abuse. The presenter (our school counsellor) was talking about the culture of put-downs and trash talk that our kids are growing up in. TV shows like "Friends" earn their bread and butter from the humor of the insult. Before John Ritter died, the sitcom "8 Simple Rules" got huge ratings from having two snarky teenage girls ridicule and outwit their loveable but gullible dad. Then there's the sports world with its mocking touchdown celebrations and imbecilic wrestling rhetoric.

It's true but shameful that we're living in an increasingly dissing culture. And sports seem to be a real flashpoint for the attitude of the insult. I can't help but notice the covers of many sports magazine for youth these days. Take the magazine "Slam," for example. Its covers are almost always occupied by scowling, sneering athletes who glare at readers in some weird attempt to intimidate them. Somehow that's supposed to be cool.

I hate this cultural trend towards Attitude – an Attitude that revels in the verbal abuse and ridicule of others. It's damaging, pointless, and monstrously stupid. All the more, our world needs models of compassion and in-your-face love for others. That's where we (and our kids) come in. It's what Christ was throughout his life on earth.

And, oh yeah, Dude. I love my uncool bike and my lame planks. Now, more than ever.

Tim Antonides is teaching in Surrey, B.C.

Have we been fair to the pacifists?

Bert den Boggende

Two decades ago I was doing research for a dissertation on Christian pacifism in Britain. I was struck by the Kuyperian worldview of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, a pacifist organization. At its founding meeting in December 1914 Rev. Richard Roberts (a moderator of the United Church of Canada in the mid-1930s) argued that pacifism was a by-product. Pacifism was not a passivity, as so frequently was and is suggested, but an active involvement in all spheres of life. Hence, the new organization: and its members were involved in, among others, labor relations, politics, rehabilitation of young offenders, and education.

The CRC has a long tradition of opposition to pacifism. In 1936, for instance, an overture to synod called pacifism "seditious," while in 1939 synod accepted a report that spoke of the "evils of present-day pacifism." This report, the basis for later reports, made it abundantly clear that pacifism was incompatible with Christian duty.

In spite of its negativism, it also concluded that in exceptional cases there could be selective conscientious objection. This clause does not seem to have been clear to congregations and classes, for when in the late 1960s some American CRC members asked for support in opposing the war in Vietnam, they were refused counsel. Although the 1969 synod did not make a statement about the war in Vietnam, it conceded that the petitioners had the right to counsel, in effect admitting that this war might be a case for selective conscientious objection. In 1977 synodical Report 37 still concluded that pacifism was "mistaken," but it also urged members to accept those who held different positions on this subject.

Synod's mandate

In light of the changes in world affairs that had occurred since September 11, 2001, synod 2003 appointed "a study committee to explore and reflect on the issues raised in the War and Peace Report … and recommend guidelines and advice for the church." The committee was requested to give special attention to five areas of concern, the first of which is most pertinent to purpose of this article: "The just war theory as an adequate paradigm for Christians to judge a government's use of military force. This exploration recognizes that the state has been given the power of the sword."

Although the mandate does not mention pacifism, it cannot be excluded, as becomes clear with the quote put in the form of a question: "Is the just war theory an adequate paradigm for Christians to judge a government's use of military force?" If it isn't, is pacifism then an adequate paradigm? Are there other options? The only other one synod has dealt with is militarism, characterized as glorifying war. Already in 1939 synod rejected this option and other synods have followed suit.

Defining pacifism

Before looking at the adequacy of the just war code, let me first look at how the CRC reports have treated pacifism.

In 1939 synod noted that "if by pacifism were meant the attitude of those who are prompted by a strong and persistent desire to promote international peace and understanding, every Christian should be a pacifist." The report continued that "this is a loose and improper use of the term." But was it an improper use of the term? Not for the 1930s, for it was only during the 1930s that the word pacifism began to acquire the connotation of rejecting all wars.

The prominent peace movement of the 1930s in Canada and Europe, or the isolation movement in the US, would perfectly fit the "loose use of the term" rather than the definition of pacifism the 1939 report suggested.

Recruitment Poster

In other words, we have to be careful with applying the term pacifist. The 1939 report defined pacifism in its recent and absolutist form: "Pacifism … stands for the conviction and attitude of those who condemn every war, and hence refuse to bear arms under any conditions." It then added the following statement: "In its most radical form this pacifism not only involves the refusal to bear arms, but even the refusal to take part in any type of work incidental in warfare, such as medical, nursing, or welfare service when such service is occasioned by and required for the prosecution of a war."

But is this a fair characterization of what can be called absolutist pacifism?

Two short illustrations taken from World War I should show it isn't. Corder Catchpool, a British Quaker, joined the Friends Ambulance Unit (FAU) as a volunteer in World War I, but when the government in 1916 made military service mandatory, he decided that he could no longer continue in the FAU. Subsequently he was convicted and jailed. Malcolm Sparkes, another British Quaker, was willing to do alternative work, but his tribunal did not allow him.

In Britain, my area of research, less than one percent of the pacifists were a absolutist pacifists and some, like Sparkes, were reluctant absolutists, willing to do alternative work, as the other 99 percent, but tribunals refused to let them. When the 1939 report speaks about pacifism's "most radical form," it fails to provide the proper context, a context not only of war, but also of state absolutism. That report speaks much about justice, but it could not be bothered to do justice to pacifists!

Scriptural support

According to the report, Christian pacifists most commonly appealed to Christ's statement, "Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." (Matt. 5:39). This is debatable: pacifists were not restricted to one text. My guess is that they commonly appealed to the whole of the Sermon on the Mount. It may be noted that the Fellowship of Reconciliation, Britain's largest Christian pacifist organization, chose 2 Cor. 5:17 and 18 as its guideline (the British FOR is the mother organization of those now part of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation). Taking one text out of the whole context of pacifist theology hardly does justice to the pacifist position.

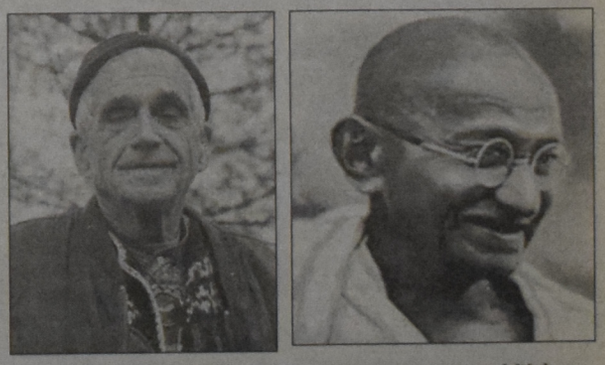
Justice or not, the report makes an important point by suggesting that Matt. 5:38-9 "gives no ground for a pacifistic position." The report notes that the passage "concerns the personal relationship of the members of the Kingdom to their fellows and repudiating all personal revenge … [that] Jesus urges upon his followers the readiness to suffer evil rather than resisting it. We are taught here that we must be willing at times to forego our rights."

Pacifists would generally agree with that interpretation and jump from the personal to the national and international level. That is a jump the report rejects, not so much on the basis of this passage, but on prior assumptions, notably the role of the state. From the passage itself it is not clear if the jump may be made or not. I'm not disputing the report's right to refer to other assumptions, but then it should do the same for pacifists – which it doesn't. While the report mentions the Kingdom of God, there is no explication of its nature, a crucial point in pacifist theology.

The report does not really seem to be interested in actual pacifist theology; otherwise it would not have stated that "many more specious arguments are used by the pacifists." One such "specious argument" is that "all going to war is incompatible with the gospel of the Prince of Peace." There is no discussion of this central pacifist point. Instead, the report continues with the comment that pacifists "are wont to stress love and ignore justice, both of which are essential in the Christian moral life."

It is true that many Christian pacifists stress love at the expense of justice; but that is not the whole picture. In fact, the British Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) was very much concerned about justice. During World War I it was extensively involved in the rehabilitation of young offenders, one of the first to do so. Together with numerous essays and pamphlets about justice, this practical application of pacifism, the "pacifism as deed" as Erasmus called for, could be regarded as a predecessor of restorative justice.

Another "specious argument" concerns force. Pacifists, the report intones, "are inclined to forget that 'in the face of unjust aggression the law of love may actually urge a demand for forcible resistance'." While pacifists questioned if the law of love makes such a demand, they had many debates about


Two famous pacifists: Daniel Berrigan,priest,activist and Mahatma Ghandi

the use of force. Many Christian pacifists had no objection to a limited use of force.

The policeman analogy

This position was questioned in the 1930s when Gandhi's non-resistance became quite popular. However, many Christian pacifists objected to Gandhi's ideology and could not accept his views on non-resistance. Those who did accept them, with or without the ideology, came to realize that non-resistance needed an enormous amount of preparation and practice. The non-Gandhians in the meantime concerned themselves with the type and extent of force, and with the notion that ends and means should be of the same nature. The problem may be illustrated with an example about a police officer.

The 1939 report introduced the police in its argument, but a more illuminating use comes from the 1977 report. It referred to a police officer who in the process of doing his duty happened to kill someone who endangered the lives of others. The implication seems to be that the officer's action is a miniature example of what a nation does on a larger scale, accepting the jump from the micro to the macro level. But is the jump legitimate? Can we even jump from the police officer to the soldier?

In 1965 I was suddenly forced to think about the roles of the soldier and the police officer. I was drafted into the Dutch army. On the first day my platoon commander told us that we were in the army in order to learn to kill. In his crude way he was right, but I must admit that I expected him to say before anything else that we were there to defend the country. My commander's statement made me think about the sixth commandment. Would a police officer hear as the first statement in his training that he was there to kill?

The task of a police officer is to apprehend the criminal and bring him or her before a judge. Judge and jury will decide whether that person is actually guilty. As a soldier I was asked to kill, not to apprehend the enemy soldier, nor to bring that soldier before a judge and jury. Whether that soldier was guilty or not was irrelevant. As a soldier I became judge, jury and executioner rolled into one.

I was certainly not the first one to realize the significant differences between a soldier and a police officer. Decades before the 1939 report Quakers had already done so. Recently World Council of Churches general secretary Dr. Konrad Raiser again made it clear that "nearly all nations distinguish between the roles of police and military, and most nations submit policing functions to judicial examination." (*CC* Dec.1, 2003). If the 1939 reporters and those who followed later had done their homework, they would have realized the inadequacy of the comparison.

The passivity of pacifists

The report also implies that pacifists don't protect the weak. The biblical and theological argument for the protection of the weak is better worked out in the 1977 report, using the positive implications of the sixth commandment as stated in the *Heidelberg Catechism*. Ultimately, the argument seems to be that if you don't use force, then you don't protect the weak. Implicitly pacifism is confused with passivity.

But twentieth-century pacifism was often an activity, not a doing nothing. At the tribunals during World War I pacifists were frequently asked what they would do if a German soldier would attempt to rape the pacifist's sister. Some answered that they would stand between them. Others would use force, although not kill the German soldier.

As far as the protection of weak nations is concerned, during the 1930s there was a proposal to send thousands of pacifists as a peace army to Manchuria, as a barrier against the Japanese. The idea of a peace army was not new, for it had already been mentioned in 1914. The idea was ridiculed, but it showed that pacifists were willing to protect weak nations and were not afraid to suffer deadly consequences of their action.

Pacifism out of fear to be killed (pacifists were often accused of being cowards) is not the pacifism speaking positively of love. It may be noted that the notion of peace army has since been transformed: the military, notably the Canadian military, now often participate in peace missions. Again, the implication that pacifists don't protect the weak, either as individuals or as nations, is misleading.

[Part II follows in the next issue.]

BuildingTrust
Vicky Van Andel Ed.

Memories are made of this

Vicky Van Andel

When I recently returned home from a two week holiday overseas, I had the opportunity to take an objective look at our home. I love our home. I love the way it is decorated, the colors of the carpet, the curtains and the furniture, everything about it. Nothing in my house is luxurious but all of it means something to me; it represents a life time of meaning.

While meaning has a lot of merit, I suddenly realized there are disadvantages to a house full of meaningful things. The downside is that all this stuff is taking over our house. And so I decided to do something about it, not only because it clutters the house, but because I needed to find a place for the few new memorables I brought home with me.

I have a friend who confidently tells me that whenever she buys something new she throws something away that is old, or gives it to the Thrift Store. That goes for clothes as well as household items. Her house is very neat.

Thinking this might be a good idea, I tried her approach a while ago. However, I soon discovered the idea doesn't work for me. Whenever I buy new clothes, I think about how good they will look with some of my old clothes. At the same time I also remember the blouse I gave away once upon a time and how it would perfectly match the new skirt I just bought.

Some people manage to give away the clothes they haven't worn for a year, rationalizing that if they manage to do without them for a whole year, they won't miss them. I can't do that either. The best I can do is juggle things around a bit by moving my T-shirts to another shelf after summer. It takes me at least five years to get rid of something. Needless to say my closet is full. I can mix and match my clothes any way I want.

Since I have some new items to display after this trip, I decided to challenge myself and create a few bare surfaces to put them on. I picked up a couple of boxes from the liquor store and started working. I managed to fill up three boxes. When my husband came home he told me the house looked very neat. When I asked him if he missed anything he said no, not at all, it was just nice and neat around here.

My thinking is that I am going to put these boxes somewhere in the basement, and if I don't miss anything by next spring, I will have a garage sale. I already have a couple of other boxes in the basement from a few years ago. I am forgetting what is in them which is a good sign. By next year for sure I will be able to let them go.

But it is not really as simple as that. When I packed those three boxes every item I held in my hands contained a memory. I enjoyed those memories and I worried that by getting rid of it, I would be giving a memory away. Every single one of those items had a story, or a person attached to it reminding me of the past and a specific time in my life. I worried that if I no longer saw the item I would lose the memory.

Stuff I put away included such things as a couple of old Dutch gin crocks, gifts from people who visited us over the years. I also put away copper ornaments I bought on Dutch markets. I packed some pieces of pottery made by my Quebecois neighbor and friend given to me twenty years ago. I packed a little plaque with an angel on it, a parting gift from a co-worker when I left my last job. I put away a ceramic jug given to me thirty years ago by a friend who I no longer am in contact with, but have not forgotten. I packed a picture given to me by a student and a nurse doll I received when I graduated. And the list goes on.

There are many items I did not pack, but could have. I kept a blue little ceramic jug my mother gave me 40 years ago when she came home from a trip to Victoria. As I held it in my hands, I asked myself if I should get rid of it. I kept it. I also kept a little wall hanging my husband brought back from Switzerland many years ago.

I kept a lot of things, so many you could say the surfaces in my house are still cluttered. All of the items I kept have a story, one I am not ready to part with.

And so the stuff around my house has memories attached to it and that's why I want to keep the things I have. That does make sense. At the same time, though, I ask myself the question if it is realistic to keep hanging on to so many memories.

If I really think about it, I would say no. That really doesn't make sense. While it is good to remember the past, we should live in the present and look to the future. We have to move forward and leave the past behind. We have a life before us filled with new challenges to get a hold of. I think I want to challenge myself to let go of the past to make room for the future. I want to make sure I have enough space around me for new challenges that come my way.

On that note I am quite sure I will have a garage sale next spring. So my goal for the next few months is to just let go. As I write this, an interesting thought comes to mind. Everything in my house has good memories attached to it. I am realizing this as I write. Do we automatically surround ourselves with good memories? Or is it a sign we treasure only the good things?

But I also packed two framed posters with these quotes: *The real voyage of discovery lies not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes*, by Marcel Proust, and: *Don't look back*. This poster has two signs pointing in opposite directions, one which has the words: *Your life*, and the other: *No longer an option* by Mary Engelbreit. Both posters meant a lot to me during a difficult time in my life. They no longer speak to me in that same way now because by the grace of God I have moved on.

My son once told me he has very good memories of the time when he was growing up and we went camping with our family in the summer time. He is married now and has his own children. Now he goes camping with his own family every summer. It is amazing how our memories get recycled! They carry on even with no effort on our part!

This is one more reason not to hang on to the past too tightly. There is a time for everything and a season for everything under heaven. I want to claim that and be fully alive in the present and look with anticipation towards the future.

Opinion

Yes ... but

Bert Hielema

Fear-mongering and peak oil

First a bit of silly news. Every Saturday I faithfully read the *Globe and Mail* Book report. In the October 23 issue Suanne Kelman, chair of the School of Journalism at Ryerson University, dealing with a book by a *Globe and Mail* columnist, wrote that people are attracted especially to those newspaper columns that infuriate them. She concluded that: "the successful columnist makes people angry." My impertinent question: "Do I make people angry? If so, is that a sign of succes?

Back to more serious business: even though the election is over, some comments are still valid. So let me compare Bush versus Kerry.

On the 90 minute ferry-trip from Black Harbor, New Brunswick, to Grand Manan Island, this fall, I had a talk with a man from Missouri. Of course we talked election – political not theological. I mentioned that the consequences of the U.S. deficits will, sooner than later, cause the dollar to collapse and with it the world economy, and suggested that perhaps people outside the U.S. should have a vote for president.

If that were the case, Bush would lose overwhelmingly. Even in countries where the governments have supported U.S. policy – Great Britain, the Netherlands, Italy, Poland, Pakistan – the majority of the population thinks Oil War II was at the least a serious error of political judgment, at worst an illegal and immoral act. Bush would no doubt lose in Iraq itself.

Fear business

One thing can be said about this election: both candidates seem to have been in the fear business: Bush pushing terror, Kerry hammering on healthcare and job losses. Whoever could frighten the folks the most, would win.

I write this a week before the election, so I am in a real bind about the outcome. We all know that the pollsters have had a hard time with this. When their questions centred on terrorism, the answers were vague and inconclusive, because it's difficult to define the evil out there, it's hard to pin down what Islamic fundamentalism is, or al-Qaeda, or just "terrorists." And since it is for the most part hidden, reaction to it was based more on emotion than on careful analysis. Fear mongering was the mode.

Bush was banking on fears for another September 11 which only he could prevent. His fearless actions and his macho, black-and-white portrait of the situation breathed unbudgeable strength. He hoped that a majority of the electorate would positively respond to that stance.

Kerry emphasized fear of losing jobs overseas, fear of losing healthcare, fostering the phobias of unemployment, of not being able to pay personal debt, of rising fuel prices and interest rates. Even fear of flu was part of the rhetoric, because thousands in the USA are scared to death as lack of flu shots leave millions without being inoculated with some fluid that may or may not help. A fear somewhat overblown, I believe. But then we have universal healthcare and 45 million there have not.

So fear was on a tear: Bush rubbing in fear of the enemy, and justifying everything he did as a response to those evil creatures out there. Kerry stressing fear of decline, arguing that Bush had lowered the status and power of the United States in the world by his incompetence in foreign policy, by "fighting the wrong war at the wrong time and the wrong place." He argued that U.S. jobs were disappearing, especially for those in manufacturing, never forgetting to mention that Bush was the first president in seventy years (that is, since the 1929 depression) during whose term of office jobs have actually decreased. He argued that Americans need to fear for their pensions and that Bush's proposals on social security will make matters still worse, that Bush's fiscal recklessness endangers the country's balance sheet and the future standard of living of America's children.

To all of this, Bush responded by claiming that he was optimistic about the "march of freedom throughout the world." But having said that, he returned immediately to the theme of fear, that the U.S. was in great danger; that only he could safely face this great peril because Kerry, a decorated Vietnam veteran, was a weakling in the face of danger.

So, it was fear, fear, and fear again. With so much smoke, was there fire? The last time the American people were so afraid was during the depression that started in 1929, prompting Franklin Roosevelt, when he was elected president in 1933, to say: "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." Roosevelt offered a New Deal, a welfare state. Later, when the U.S. was attacked at Pearl Harbor and entered the Second World War, he offered the "four freedoms" which included the "freedom from fear."

But Vietnam, now thirty years ago, rekindled that fear of uncertainty, extinguished for a decade when the Soviet Union collapsed, bringing in a decade of exuberance and triumphalism, because "The American Way" had prevailed. Now fear is back on track, not the least because of Osama bin Laden's successful attack on the U.S. at home.

Bush seized the opportunity to invade Iraq and show the world the power of the USA. But the U.S. public now senses, ever so vaguely, that military power is not enough. Religious people they are, they fear, for once justifiedly, that "All who draw the sword will die by the sword," Jesus' very words when he was about to be arrested and cruelly killed.

Why talk about it?

One thing that never entered the debate was oil. The general attitude of both candidates was that oil had never run out before, so why talk about it. And we are no different. We don't even think about it. If we run low, we phone our fuel dealer and it'll be there within a few hours. Natural gas is even easier: no call needed. As long as we pay the bill we have a perpetual supply.

No worry in the world. Great new discoveries are just around the corner. And if not: proven reserves are good for another 40 years at current use. So, no sweat, the future is secure. And if all else fails, there are the oil-sands. In Klein country we have more oil stuck to the sands than is buried in the entire Middle East. And doesn't Economics 101 teaches us that high prices always create new supplies? So burn away.

The Economist in its October 9th issue paints a rosy picture: "gas-guzzlers will have plenty to run on for the rest of this century." However. When both CNN and the *National Post* of all publications – how mainstream can you get! – wonder whether oil has peaked, then it's time to take notice. You can argue that ASPO, the Association for the Study of Peak Oil, might be prejudiced, but when oil-guru, Matthew R. Simmons, a banker who has a $54 billion stake in the oil industry says that 'The Hour Is at Hand," we better take notice. What Mr Simmons shows in his latest PowerPoint presentation is available free on the Web – just Google 'Simmons & Co. International.'

Allow me to provide some comments on his slide-show, perhaps just as he would have done while graphically presenting his findings, something I can't do here. Of course we'll never run out of oil. The stone age didn't end because we ran out of stones, so the oil age won't end because we run out of oil. It's a fact, though, that suppliers have trouble pumping enough to satisfy demand, which has grown so much that it's like a runaway train. The higher demand soars, the sooner Peak Oil will come.

Perhaps it's already here. Peak Oil? What is it? It's when supply reaches a plateau, has attained a maximum level, after which, first slowly and then more quickly and perhaps even rapidly, oil resources go down. We tend to forget that crude is a non-renewable substance. No matter how high the price, gone is gone. There's just so much of it and when that 'so much' is pumped up, we can't possibly create more for all the money in the world.

Consider this: Seventy percent of all oil comes from fields that are 30 year or older. Twenty percent comes from fields that are over 50 years old. A growing number of these fields have passed their peak. Of course, technically we are very smart, but the trouble with new technology is that it drains oil faster, which means that decline rates are soaring. Also these smart pumps that can go up or down or sideways, sometimes by-pass smaller, but easily producible oil, which again leads to quicker depletion. Today everything has to go fast and on the cheap, which is fine when we have crude to spare. But that isn't the case anymore. Once these oil pockets remain unpumped, they forever are left behind.

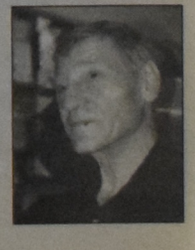
Light, sweet crude supply has already reached its maximum output. Saudi Arabia had lots of this premium stuff that needed little refining; could almost directly travel from wellhead to your neighborhood gas station. The likelihood of discovering more of this beautiful fluid is waning. Now the trend has turned ugly, toward a growing proportion of sour and heavy crude that needs a lot of doctoring before it is fit for your and mine gas tank. This means you and I have to shell out more shekels.

At this point it's not so much oil supply that's the killer: it's oil demand. It's estimated that for the last quarter of this year oil demand will increase by 2.4 million barrels per day. In the next 15 months the world needs another 4.3 million extra barrels, so that by the Fall of 2005 the suppliers have to come up with 86 million barrels per day.

Oil companies make forecasts because it takes decades to build refineries and bring new fields on line, if they can find them. In early 1990's Exxon, Shell, BP, all looked into their crystal balls and figured that world demand for oil would be stuck at 66 million barrels per day for the foreseeable future. It didn't help that as late as December 1998, a mere 6 years ago, oil was selling for $10.35 (US of course) per barrel, not enough to really spend billions on exploration and new infrastructure. Thanks to China's and India's sudden rise, our 21st century has become energy-hungry and, so say some, energy starved.

You might be surprised to learn that Canada has the dubious honor of the highest per capita energy use in the world: 69 barrels per person of personal consumption, 9 higher than the USA, and more than 10 times as much as China, which has a mere 6.6 barrels per person. We can thank the "savior of the world' Alberta oil sands for this distinction. There, two tons of sand, after having been boiled in water, yields only one barrel of oil. An energy-costly process because – so I have read but can't verify – the equivalent of two barrels of oil are burned to obtain three barrels of crude. Plus lots of foul air. Plus for every one barrel of clean oil obtained, two-and-a half barrels of gooey waste water, stored in ponds as big as large lakes. Oil-sand-derived crude also causes destruction of boreal forests, deaths of livestock, human miscarriages.

Oil, oil, toil, toil. It's like Vietnam and Iraq: we destroy the land to save it. Hmmm.



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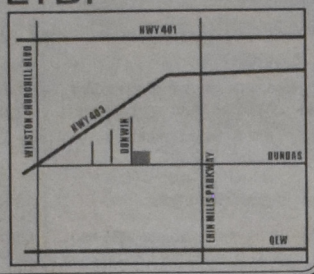

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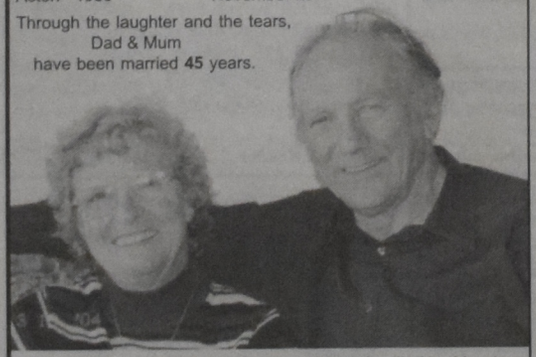
Dad & Mum
have been married **45** years.



The Lord willing and with thankfulness to God for all of his blessings we would like to announce the **45th Anniversary** of:

JOHN AND ALI LOOYENGA (van Arragon)

Wedding text: (Phil. 4:6)
"Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything; tell God your needs and don't forget to thank him for his answers."

With love and congratulations from
your kids, grandkids and great-grandson.
Rick Looyenga, *Acton*
Harry & Kim Looyenga –Travis, Sara & Ben, Chris, Brittany, *Frankford*
Sid & Hilda Looyenga, *Acton*
Rosemary Looyenga & Yvon Pilon – Melissa, Shania, *Orillia*
Gerald & Shannon Looyenga – Kara, Conner, *Acton*

Home: RR# 4, Acton ON L7J 2M1 Email:**alilva@sympatico.ca**

Anniversaries

"He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord." Proverbs 18:22

1954 September 30 2004

SAKE AND TJALTJE DYKSTRA

We give thanks to God for the many blessings he has given to our parents in their **50 years of marriage**. With love from your children:

Linda & Rob Van Boom
Ingrid & Ron Kielstra
Marcia & Chris Dawes
Sid & Jane Dykstra
Nancy Dykstra
Roger & Karen Dykstra
17 grandchildren and 2 great-granddaughters

Family and friends are invited to join us as we celebrate with an **Open House** on November 20, 2004 at 2:30 p.m. at the Collingwood Christian Reformed Church on Poplar Sideroad in Collingwood, Ont.

Home address: Box 7, RR#2, Clarksburg ON N0H 1J0

1954 Toronto, November 20 2004

"In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight." Prov. 3:6

With thankfulness to God
for his steadfast love and faithfulness,
we celebrate the **50th Wedding Anniversary**
of our parents and grandparents

NICK AND FRAN DYKSTRA (nee **Burmania**)

With love and prayers that God will continue to bless them richly:

John & Alice Rekman, *Sarnia ON*
Carl & Andrea Van Rooyen, Janelle, Mark, Brad
Chuck & Joanna Dykstra, *Brampton ON*
Lisa, Eric, Michelle, Peter
Rick & Yvonne Dykstra, *St Catharines ON*
Joel, Erin, Steven, Daryl

Open House on Saturday,
November 20, 2004
1 - 3 p.m. at their home
275 Avonlaugh Rd
Belleville ON K8N 4Z2

Best wishes only, please.

Obituaries

Garijp, Friesland Chatham, Ontario
October 28, 1920 October 23, 2004

"Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have summoned you by name; you are mine." Isaiah 43:1b

JACOB (Jake) WYMENGA

Was called home to be with his Lord and Savior

He is survived by his beloved wife of 56 years,
Wietske (Wendy) Herder.

Dear father, grandfather, and great-grandfather of:
Sylvia Maynard, *London*
Tara and daughter Martine, Cassi, Jon, and Melanne
Jerry & Carol Wymenga, *Blenheim*
Samantha, Robert, and Dylan.
Bill & Marlene Wymenga, *Blenheim*
Lindsay, Bryan, Krista, and Michael
Rick & Annemarie Wymenga, *Blenheim*
Aaron and Kyle
Margaret Wymenga, *Brampton*

Dear brother of: Eeuwe (Joe) of *St. Thomas*; *in Holland:* Roelof and Myndert; sisters Aaltje, Albertje, Renske, and Joukje; Predeceased by two brothers Sjouke and Reinder (Ray).

A Funeral Service celebrating Jake's life was held at the Blenheim Christian Reformed Church on Tuesday October 26, 2004 with Rev. Dirk Miedema officiating, followed by Interment at the Evergreen Cemetery, Blenheim.

Correspondence:
W. Wymenga
12 Flemingo St
Blenheim ON N0P 1A0

Tjerkwert (Fr) Kingston, ON
Dec. 29, 1936 Oct. 13, 2004

"I have fought the good fight,
I have finished the race,
I have kept the faith.
Now there is in store for me
the crown of righteousness."
2 Timothy 4:7,8a

The Lord took home his child,
and our brother (brother-in-law)

ROBERT (Bob) VAN DYKE

Ida & Harry Beimers *Brighton*
Jerry & Freda Van Dyk *Cambridge*
Ate & Nelly Van Dijk *Holland*
Ria & Piet Kroneman *Holland*
Beverley Slofstra nee VanDyk *Jarvis*
Akke & Pieter Tjepkema *Holland*
Taapke Van Dijk *Holland*
Geertje & Jan Oudega *Holland*
Dreves & Marian Van Dijk *Holland*

As brothers and sisters (in-law) we pray that God will continue to sustain, and comfort our dear sister, Bob's wife Willy, and her family. The funeral service took place on Oct. 18, 2004 in the first C.R.C. of Kingston.

Correspondence: Mrs Willy VanDyke
RR 3, Harrowsmith ON K0H 1V0

Delft Brampton, ON
April 8, 1907 Oct. 15, 2004

Ik kan gaan slapen zonder zorgen,
want slapend kom ik bij U thuis.
Alleen bij u ben ik geborgen.
Gij doet mij rusten tot de morgen
en wonen in een veilig huis.

Peacefully went to be with her Lord on October 15, 2004 in her 98th year.

KATRIEN BEVAART (nee **De blonde**)

Loving Mother of:
Jan & Janny Bevaart, *Hamilton, ON*
Anton Bevaart & Susan, *Brantford, ON*
Nelly & Wolter Smit
and 14 grandchildren
and many great-grandchildren.

Correspondence: J. Bevaart
24 Sister Kern Terr
Hamilton ON L9B 2M1

MARIA OSKAM-Van Dyke

went to be with the Lord September 21, 2004 in her 92nd year.
She was predeceased
by her husband Jan in 1990,
and by an infant grandson, Jacobus.

She is survived by her sisters Reina and Rika in Holland. She is loved and will be dearly missed by her children:
John & Ann
Ena
Rita & Jacobus Verburg
Matthea & John Hoogenboom
Mary Jane & Philip Sizer
as well as
15 grand & 22 great-grandchildren.

Memorial Service was held
September, 24, 2004 at Holland
Christian Homes, Brampton Ontario

March 28, 1931 September 27, 2004
Barend, Holland Hagersville, Ontario

Psalm 31:24 – Trust in the Lord.
Be of good courage,
and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord.

On Monday,
September 27, 2004, peacefully,
the Lord called unto himself his child

KEN RAUWERDA

in his 74th year.
Beloved husband of Ditta (Nieuwland)
Dear father of:
Ernie & Ann, *Simcoe*
Derrick and Peggy, *Chatham*
Rose & Mike Young, *Jarvis*
Ken & Wilma, *Nanaimo, B.C.*
Stephanie & Allan Pyl, *Whitby*
Loving grandfather to 12 grandchildren.
He is lovingly remembered by his brothers and sisters: Emmy & Mike Voorberg, Wim & Henny, Cor & Susan, Peter & Trudy, Gertie & Ralph Hielema, Dick & Shirley, Dea & Henry Veldhuis, Agnes & Bert Hanemaayer.
He is also lovingly remembered by the Nieuwland family.

Ken was a member of Hagersville Christian Reformed Church.
Funeral was held on Thursday, September 30, 2004.

Correspondence address:
Mrs. Ditta Rauwerda, RR#1
Jarvis ON N0A 1J0

Classifieds/ Job Opportunities

Obituary

Velsen Brampton
November 13, 1910 - October 9, 2004

With deep sorrow
we wish to announce the passing of

GERRITJE TJOELKER-PEL

Widow of George (Goitzen) Tjoelker

Henk & Marg Tjoelker, *Newmarket*
Linda & Simon Bootsma, *Aurora*
John & Henny Tjoelker, *Mississauga*
Frieda & Frank Engelage, *Grimsby*
Alice & Cor Van Dorp, *Smithville*
Mike & Fay Tjoelker, *Guelph*
Bart Tjoelker, *The Netherlands*
Richard & Tessa Tjoelker, *Strathroy*
Trudy Van Oosten, *Sarnia*
26 grandchildren &
36 great-grandchildren

The funeral took place
Wednesday October 13,
Rev. Peter Kranenburg officiating.

Psalm 121

Contact address: Linda Bootsma
34 Connaught Ave
Aurora ON L4G 1C6
phone (905) 727-5687

For Rent

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TABER CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

is advertising for an **ADMINISTRATOR** for the 2005-2006 school year. Taber Christian School located in Southern Alberta, is a well-established interdenominational school with 144 students in Kindergarten to Grade 9. Taber Christian School is operated by the Society of Christian Education of Southern Alberta. The administrator will work co-operatively with the administrators from Immanuel Christian Elementary School and Immanuel Christian High School.
Applications will be accepted until January 07,2005.

Please direct inquiries or applications to:

Marilyn Visser
4809 – 60 Avenue, Taber AB T1G 1E9
ph: 403-223-4550 Fax: 403-223-4693
taberchristian@shaw.ca

GEORGETOWN DISTRICT CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

is seeking applications for an **ADMINISTRATOR** to begin in August 2005. GDCS currently serves 205 students from pre-school through Grade 8. It is a fully interdenominational school, operated by the Georgetown District Christian School Society, and is a member of the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools. GDCS is located in the heart of beautiful Halton Hills. Applications will be accepted until January 3, 2005.

Please forward your application or inquiries to:

Wilma Grin
13106 22nd Sideroad, R.R.#1
Georgetown, Ontario L7G 4S4
905-877-8180

FULL-TIME ADMINISTRATOR

JOHN KNOX CHRISTIAN SCHOOL - Oakville, an interdenominational school with a diverse family base is seeking an enthusiastic visionary for principal for the 2005 - 2006 school year. JKCS is a JK - grade 8 school which includes 385 students from 214 families and a faculty of 30. Qualified individuals should send their resumes alsong with their philosophy of Christian Education by *November 30* to:

Laurie Atkins, Board Chair
1161 Saginaw Crescent
Mississauga, Ontario L5H 3W4
Email: latkins@jkcs-oakville.org

School Address: John Knox Christian School
2232 Sheridan Garden Dr., Oakville, ON L6J 7T1 905-829-8048
Website: www.jkcs-oakville.org

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Nico & Alice Jukema,
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Fax: 519-485-2103
email: jukema@lilbitcountry.ca
web: www.lilbitcountry.ca

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facsimile 905-701-4347

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Faculty Positions

August 2005

Dordt College is seeking applications in the following areas:

Business Administration
Human Resources and other fields.

Communication
The department is especially interested in applicants with background and expertise in visual communication.

Education
Introductory, upper-level (elementary and secondary methods).

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Mathematics
Introductory and intermediate-level courses.

Music
Preference for organ, church music and music history.

To learn more about a position and receive application materials, qualified persons committed to a Reformed, biblical perspective and educational philosophy are encouraged to send a letter of interest and curriculum vita/resume to:

Dr. Rockne McCarthy
Vice President for Academic Affairs
Dordt College, 498 4th Ave. NE
Sioux Center, IA 51250-1697
Facsimile: 712 722-4496
E-mail: vpaa@dordt.edu

Web site: www.dordt.edu/offices/academic_affairs

Dordt College is an equal opportunity institution that strongly encourages the applications of women, minorities, and disabled persons.

REDEEMER
University College

welcomes applications for a tenure-track position in Religion and Theology.

REDEEMER UNIVERSITY COLLEGE invites applications for a tenure-track position in the Department of Religion and Theology, to begin July 2005. The successful candidate will be prepared to teach introductory courses in one or more of the following: Bible, worldview, and theology. Preference will be given to candidates who are also qualified to teach senior courses in either Missions or Youth Ministry.

As a liberal arts and sciences university college rooted in the Reformed tradition of Christianity, we seek candidates who are committed to teaching and pursuing scholarship from this perspective. Applicants should possess, or be near completion of, a Ph.D.

Interested applicants should submit a *curriculum vitae*, three letters of reference, and a one-page or two-page statement describing their own faith commitment and how it shapes their academic work. Direct general inquiries and applications to:

Dr. Jacob P. Ellens, Vice-President (Academic)
Redeemer University College
777 Garner Road East
Ancaster, ON L9K 1J4 Canada
jellens@redeemer.on.ca

The deadline for applications is January 15, 2005 or until the position is filled.

Redeemer University College offers equal employment opportunities to qualified applicants. *In accordance with Canadian Immigration requirements, Canadian citizens and permanent residents will be considered first for this position.*

"Hoe zal ik U ontvangen?"

will be the theme of the **Heritage Service, December 19,** 2004, 2 p.m. **Zion CRC** Adelaide East and Central Park, **Oshawa.**
Pastor John Veenstra, Mr. Jim Hoogsteen, organist.

Classifieds

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www.redeemer.on.ca stewardship@redeemer.on.ca

TRINITY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
2170 Itabashi Way,
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GIANT BAZAAR
on **Nov. 13**
9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
FREE ENTRY.

Radio in het Nederlands
Saturday morning CJMR 1320 AM and 710 AM
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Redeemer University College Events

November 25 to 27
Redeemer's Theate Arts Dept.
presents **Judith Thompson's play "Perfect Pie"**
Director, Raymond Louter (Preview, Matinee & Evening Performances)
A serious, thought-provoking play for teenage & adult audiences.
Box Office 1-877-779- 0913 for tickets, times and play synopsis.

December 3 & 4
Redeemer Concert & Alumni Choirs
present two performances of **Handel's "Messiah"**. 8pm
Dec. 3 at Redeemer
Dec. 4 at Centenary United Church 24 Main St. W in Hamilton.
Box Office 1-877-779-0913

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@ issue dates
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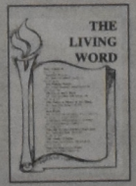

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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Nov. 5 **Christian Festival Concert**, Roy Thomson Hall, **Toronto**, 7:30 pm. Order tickets from Ontario Christian Music Assembly, Ph: 416-636-9779 or email: landmkooy@rogers.com

Nov 6 **Concert of Sacred Music** by **St. Thomas Crescendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m. **Maranatha** CRC, 2811 Highway #2 East **Bowmanville** (Free will offering) Info:(519) 637-4357

Nov. 6,7 **Calvin** CRC, **Dundas**, Ont. will celebrate their **50th year**. Come join our celebration! Festivities are being planned. For info: Fred VanderVelde at 905-336-5619 Fax: 905-336-2376 or Brenda DeGroot at 905-689-6350 or email: p-b.degroot@sympatico.ca

Nov 10 The 2004 Annual **Church & Charity Law Seminar** 8:45 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. at the Young-Nak Korean Presbyterian Church 650 McNicoll Avenue, **Toronto**, ON. *See ad below for more details.*

Nov 12 Concert, **Clinton** CRC 7:30 pm. A program of organ, piano, and vocal music by the Kruisselbrink Sisters from Tara, Ont. and the Men of Note. Info: 519-482-5372

Nov 13 **TRINITY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL** at 2170 Itabashi Way, **Burlington** will be hosting a **GIANT BAZAAR** on from 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Free entry.

Nov. 13 The Lighthouse Christian Community Centre annual **International Dinner and Silent Auction**. Help celebrate and support this inner-city ministry. New, better banquet facility: Columbus Hall, Lawrence and Dufferin, **Toronto**. Reservations required in advance: Lighthouse 416 535-6262 or email janet@lighthousecentre.ca

Nov 19 **Annual Dutch Christmas Hymn Sing,** 7.30 p.m. at Holland Christian Homes, Heritage Hall, **Brampton**, John Visser, Organist; Lenny Dykstra, song leader; John and Marion Lekx, duet; Johanna Bernard, soloist; Rev. Jacob Kuntz, meditation.

Nov 25 - 27 **Redeemer's Theate Arts** Dept. presents Judith Thompson's **play** "Perfect Pie" Director, Raymond Louter (Preview, Matinee & Evening Performances) A serious, thought-provoking play for teenage & adult audiences. Box Office 1-877-779- 0913 for tickets, times and play synopsis.

Nov 27 **Concert of Sacred Music** by **St. Thomas Crescendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m. **Bethel** CRC, 17 Robinson Road, off Hwy. #3 **Dunnville** (Freewill Offering) Info:(905) 387-0235

Nov 28 **Dutch Community Christmas Song Service** at 7:30 p.m. Emmanuel Reformed Church, 170 Clarke St. **Woodstock**. Rev. Roeland Hartmans. Babysitting provided. Refreshments.

Dec 3 & 4 **Redeemer Concert & Alumni Choirs** present two performances of Handel's "Messiah". 8pm Dec. 3 at Redeemer and Dec. 4 at Centenary United Church 24 Main St. W in Hamilton. Box Office 1-877-779-0913

Dec 12 **Christmas Concert** by **St. Thomas Crescendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m. **Knox** Presbyterian Church, 55 Hincks Street, **St. Thomas** (Free will offering) Info: (519) 637-4357

Dec 19 **Christmas Concert** by **St. Thomas Crescendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m. **Knox** Presbyterian Church, 9 Victoria Street North, **Goderich.** Info: (519) 637-4357

Dec 19 **Heritage Service**, 2 p.m Theme "Hoe zal ik U ontvangen?" at the Zion CRC Adelaide East and Central Park, **Oshawa**. Pastor John Veenstra, Mr. Jim Hoogsteen, organist.

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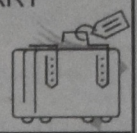

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London 519-472-2700 or 1-800-265-1141
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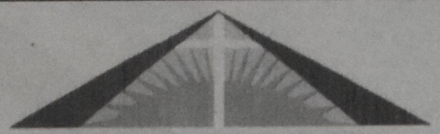

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Burlington ON L7N 3L4
905-639-9054

For pictures and more information, go to our website at:
http://home.worldchat.com/~hordyk/MaranathaHomes.html

ANNUAL DUTCH CHRISTMAS HYMN SING

November 19, 2004
7:30 p.m. at
Holland Christian Homes
Heritage Hall, **Brampton**

John Visser, Organist;
Lenny Dykstra, song leader;
John and Marion Lekx, duet;
Johanna Bernard, soloist;
Rev. Jacob Kuntz, meditation.

Presented by Zingend Geloven Foundation

Welkom

DUTCH COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS SONG SERVICE

Sunday, November 28,
7:30 p.m. at the
Emmanuel Ref. Church
170 Clarke St. **Woodstock**

Service led by
Rev. Roeland Hartmans
Babysitting is provided.
Refreshments served
after the service.
"We hope that you all can come"

Liberation Choir with Willem VanSuijdam and Andre Knevel at the organ are having our
1ST ANNUAL CHRISTMAS HYMNS SING-ALONG CONCERT
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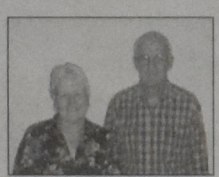

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News

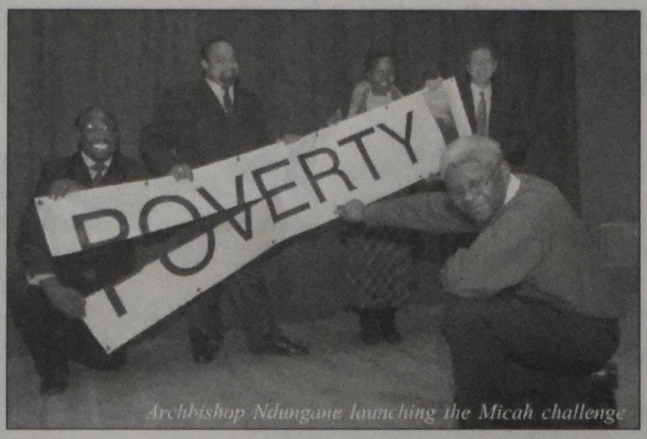
New campaign on global poverty gets global church and NGO backing

Chris Herlinger

New York (ENI) – A global alliance of aid and development agencies and evangelical Christian churches have launched a new campaign to spotlight the problem of global poverty. The "Micah Challenge", officially launched in New York on October 15 in conjunction with the UN-sponsored International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, seeks to mobilize Christians around a series of development goals sought by the 191 United Nations member states.

The Millennium Development Goals – which include halving the rate of "absolute global poverty" by 2015 – cover concerns like economic and hunger issues and also education, gender equality, the environment and HIV/AIDS.

"How can we claim to follow Jesus if we are not prepared to work to achieve his gospel of good news for the poor?" Said Njongon-kulu Ndungane, the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, launching the campaign. "When Christians work with one another, united across nationalities and races, across rich and poor, across men, women and children, we have an enormously powerful and influential voice."



Archbishop Ndungane launching the Micah challenge

Archbishop Ndungane, successor to the Most Revd Desmond Tutu and once a political prisoner along with Nelson Mandela on Robben Island, was launching Micah Challenge, which aims to mobilize Christians to lobby, campaign and pray for governments to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Addressing an audience of church leaders from around the world, the Archbishop stated, "Christians can play a vital role in helping global leaders meet their commitments. When Christians work with one another, united across nationalities and races, across rich and poor, across men, women and children, we have an enormously powerful and influential voice. We must speak loud and clear."

Describing poverty as 'evil' and the Millennium Development Goals as the most 'ambitious commitment the world has ever made to combating poverty,' the Archbishop stated "There is no doubt that the world can afford to do all that is necessary to meet the Millennium Development Goals. But there is a large question mark against whether or not we have the will power.... Governments and business can say the words, but they need all the encouragement, all the pressure, that we can give, to deliver the goods."

He added: "They need to hear that their citizens truly want them to take the hard steps that are required, so we may live in a world where there is some for all, not all for some. For it is unacceptable that in a world of surplus, 800 million people go hungry every day."

The Micah Challenge will bring a powerful voice to global efforts to achieve the (UN) Millennium Development Goals, and will empower church engagement with civil society and government on issues affecting the poor, the organizers said.

The World Evangelical Alliance, which represents more than 3 million churches internationally, and the Micah Network, a coalition of more than 260 Christian-based aid and development organizations, are leaders in the effort. Other agencies involved include Tearfund UK; World Vision (UK, Australia, Canada); World Relief; World Concern; Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (Canada and USA); Tear (Australia, Netherlands, Switzerland); Service d'Entraide et de Liaison, SEL (France); and the Baptist World Alliance. Local development agencies from India, Peru and Zambia, among others, are also involved.

The Christian Reformed Church in Canada joins with the Evangelical Fellowship to launch the Micah Challenge in Canada

The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) announced that it is partnering with other Canadian Christian ministries to launch the Canadian expression of the Micah Challenge.

The Micah Challenge is a global Christian campaign that will raise a prophetic and powerful call and commitment to reducing world poverty. It derives its name from Micah 6:8: "...what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God." The campaign looks both inward, to deepening Christian commitment to work for and with economically poor communities, and outwards, urging leaders of rich and poor nations to fulfil their public promise to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, and so halve poverty by 2015.

At the October 15 launch of the Global Micah Challenge in New York, South African Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane declared, "The Micah Challenge represents a significant new movement in global civil society to address the evils of poverty. It is God's challenge to us, to be his agents of hope in this hurting world."

"This is a unique moment for the Canadian Church to step up to the plate and join with our global community in demonstrating God's love to the world's most vulnerable and impoverished people," remarked Geoff Tunnicliffe, the EFC director of Global Initiatives, as he returned from the global launch to kick off the campaign in Canada.

At the Canadian Launch, held October 18 at the Laurentian Leadership Centre in Ottawa, Fidelis Wainaina, director of Kenya's Maseno InterChristian Children's Self Help Group (MICH) addressed the gathering, stating that the heart of the Micah Challenge consists of, "...focusing on the people – seeing the world through the eyes of individuals."

Wayne deJong of the Canadian Council of Christian Charities Relief and Development Group and co-chair of the Micah Challenge Canada stated, "We are very excited about the potential of the Micah Challenge campaign to help Christians understand the complex issues related to global poverty, and unite them in speaking with one voice for and with the poor." DeJong is the Canadian director of the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, the relief and development agency of the Christian Reformed Church.

"Canada has a reputation for compassion to the wider world," said Dave Toycen, president of World Vision Canada, "The Micah Challenge is a strategic opportunity for Christians to express their love for their neighbor in a powerful, life changing way."

Bruce Clemenger, president of the EFC, told a story of one Canadian's escape from poverty in the past century. "Many Canadian Christians are only one generation removed from need, and are acting out a biblical mandate, and motivated by an empathy and experience that fosters hope for a real reduction in poverty, globally."

The leading partners in the Micah Challenge in Canada are the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, the Canadian Council of Christian Charities Relief and Development Group, the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, and the Canadian Council of Churches Commission on Justice and Peace.

The synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America endorsed the Micah Challenge in June.

In the same month the Executive Committee of the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) decided to pass on the Micah Challenge to the REC Assembly in 2005. The committee judged the challenge to be a way the REC could express its continuing concern over the many economic inequities that span its member churches. The last assembly asked the Executive to continue searching for ways to address these concerns, to follow up the endorsement of the Jubilee 2000 campaign to reduce international debt.

[More information on the Micah Challenge is available at: www.micahchallenge.ca For more on the UN's Millennium Development Goals see "Africa still needs help" in *CC*, Sept. 27.]

"Biblical symbols of justice"

The Micah Challenge logo uses two biblical symbols of justice, the sun at dawn and a river, rolling down.

These symbols are found in Isaiah 58:6-12 and Amos 5:21-24. Both of these passages, like Micah 6:8, call on God's people to practice justice. The beautiful passage from Isaiah says:

Is not this the fast that I choose
To lose the bonds of injustice
To undo the thongs of the yoke
To let the oppressed go free
And to break every yoke?
Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked to cover them
And not to hide yourself from your own kin
Then your light shall break forth like the dawn;..."

The passage from Amos concludes:

let justice roll down like waters
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream